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A HISTORY OF SKIING IN CANADA

PRIOR TO 1940

by



ROLF TONNING LUND

A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "A HISTORY OF SKIING IN CANADA PRIOR TO 1940" submitted by ROLF TONNING LUND in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

I INTRODUCTION

The study of history, and the analysis of sports in the culture, have until recently been somewhat neglected by scholars and physical educators. They have been cited as having, "paid little or no attention...to the historical aspect of sports", or to the "...effect sports have in the culture".¹ An awareness of this is slowly being realized in Canada, through the efforts of Physical Educators², through recently completed historical studies³ and by the action taken at professional conferences.⁴ That the cultural history of Canada is relatively short, may well

¹L.H. Johnson, "Education Needs Historical Studies", Phi Delta Kappan, 36:157, 1955

²M.L. Howell, Letter Proposing History of Sport Committee, Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, May, 1969. Proposed Symposium on Sports History, at the University of Alberta, May, 1970.

³M.A. Hall, "A History of Women's Sport in Canada Prior to World War 1". (Unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1968).

F. Cosentino, "A History of Canadian Football", (Unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1967).

⁴Jack Passmore, President, Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Statement made at the Representative Council Meetings, University of Alberta, June 21, 1966; Proceedings of the History of Physical Education Section, Biennial Convention Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Victoria, B.C., June 21, 1969.

account for the apparent lack of research into the historical aspect of Canadian sport and physical education. However, Means speaks of a profession as being, "pre-occupied with what has been current and contemporary".⁵

This, it appears, has been the case with physical education in Canada. According to Woody; "Institutions, movements, men and women associated with the development of play and physical education, are waiting for an historic interview".⁶ As a result of this prevalent attitude, much of what could have become part of our cultural heritage in physical education, has not yet been recorded, written, or in some cases even discovered.

Physical education and sports are often considered products of the culture in which they are practiced.⁷ Throughout their process of development, all aspects of the existing culture and environment exert their influence. Sporting pastimes tend, in most cultures, to be practiced through specific agencies or institutions. In the study of sports history, according to Stumpf, we should be concerned with the problem of sports, "in the larger framework of

⁵R.K. Means, "A Case for Historical Understanding", Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, 34:26, 1963.

⁶Thomas Woody, "Of History and its Method", Journal of Experimental Education, 15:186, 1947.

⁷F.F. Stumpf, Sports and the Cultures of Men. The Science and Medicine of Exercise and Sport, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 636.

human behaviour; the individual and society".⁸ It is important, then, that Canadian sports and physical education keep pace with the changing cultural and social patterns in our society. Davidson argues that if we are to utilize the salient features of sports and games in the desired direction of cultural growth, then we must resist any attempts to weaken their educational values through unwholesome practices.⁹ Studies in the areas of physical education or sports history may help to preserve these values, and establish the current status of sport in society.

L'Heureux thinks of sport as, "an instrument designed by man to serve certain purposes conceived by him to be worthwhile".¹⁰ It is implied also, that to be worthwhile, sport should be used as, "a means to an end and not an end in itself".¹¹ If society is to utilize sports activity as an educational or cultural force, then in some ways, its influence should be controlled by man. In referring to the importance of understanding the role and value of sport in society, Huxley has suggested that, "since what man chooses

⁸Ibid.

⁹S.A. Davidson, "A History of Sports and Games in Eastern Canada Before World War 1" (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1951, p. 131.

¹⁰W.L. L'Heureux, "Sport in the Canadian Culture", Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Washington, 35:28, 1964.

¹¹Ibid.

to do with this forceful instrument will be ordained by him, it may be well to reflect upon the nature and purposes of this phenomenon".¹² It seemed inconceivable to him that a phenomenon so common and influential in society had received so little attention from scholars, scientists, and physical educators.

Sports and games in Canada have evolved and become organized through the efforts of interested individuals, educators, and great sporting figures. The form in which they are currently practiced resulted as well from the influence of non-personal factors, such as the ecological setting, economics, and improved technology. Sociological, or institutional forces, also tended to shape the form in which sports were expressed. The dynamics of these forces and their influence have served to modify society as well as its sporting activity. It is the genesis and growth of skiing, the influence of leadership, and the process of change, which has become the subject matter of this study. This, it is hoped, will in some way contribute to the growing body of knowledge of and about sport in the Canadian culture. Nevins outlines the value of such historical study by stating;

¹²A. Huxley, Ends and Means, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1938), p. 187.

History enables bewildered bodies of human beings to grasp their relationship with their past, and help them chart on general lines their immediate forward course...it confers on them a consciousness of unity, a realization of the value of individual achievement and a comprehension of the importance of planned effort as contrasted with aimless drifting.¹³

This interpretation has served to guide the course of this initial study into skiing as one aspect of Canadian sporting history.

II PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to trace the development of skiing in selected areas of Canada from the earliest recorded reference until 1940.

III DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purposes of this study and for a clearer understanding of the problem, it will be necessary to define several terms. These will serve as thesis definitions and may not necessarily apply outside the context of the study.

Snowshoe. The snowshoe is referred to as a device attachable to the feet which enables the wearer to walk on snow.

Ski. The ski is referred to as a device attachable to the feet which enables the wearer to glide or slide over snow.

¹³Allan Nevins, Gateway to History, (new York: Anchor Books, Dougle Day Inc., 1962), p. 33.

Skiing. Skiing is the ability to glide over snow, utilizing devices known as skis; a modern form of sport in which skis are used.

Sport. An activity will be referred to as a sport when, at that time in its history, it ceases to be a means of livelihood or survival; when it is practiced or engaged in during leisure and free time; and when a set of rules, pattern of performance, or mutual understanding about expected behaviour is recognizable.

Sports Club. A sports club refers to that stage in the development of the activity when individuals organize or band together for a common purpose. A formal or informal social structure appears then, and persons tend to identify with others having similar interests. The specific purpose of a club may be to: facilitate social interaction, co-ordinate and direct collective effort towards the solution of a problem, or to stimulate competition.

Organized Sport. A sport is considered organized when, at a stage in the development of the activity, sport clubs, having common interests, organize for common purposes. Such a grouping together of clubs often becomes an intermediary step in the process of development between the individual club stage and the National Federation or sports governing body stage. Regular leagues, meets or tournaments are usually held and are governed by a prescribed or accepted set of rules.

Federation or National Governing Body. A Federation or National Governing Body occurs at that stage in the development of the activity when several organized sports clubs associate for the purpose of formally governing the sport and the activities of member clubs, and their respective athletes.

Canadian Amateur Ski Association (CASA). The Canadian Amateur Ski Association is the Governing body for skiing in Canada, and also represents Canadian ski interests to other international sports governing bodies. This organization will be referred to as the CASA.

Federation Internationale de Ski (FIS). The Federation Internationale de Ski is the supreme authority in all matters concerning the international sport of skiing. One ski organization from each nation may represent that country on the FIS Council. This organization will be referred to in the study as the FIS.

Scandinavian. This term has been used frequently in this study in reference to the origin of skis, and to describe the ethnic background of many of Canada's first ski pioneers. The geographic areas have been restricted primarily to Norway, Sweden and Finland. The countries of Denmark, Iceland and Greenland, though considered part of Scandinavia, have not, it seems, made any significant contribution to the development of skiing in Canada. Therefore, within the context of this study the use of the term will refer to the

three countries of Norway, Sweden and Finland, unless otherwise specified.

Nordic Skiing. Nordic skiing is the traditional or classical sporting discipline of skiing, which originated in Scandinavia. The term may be used in reference to either of the two separate ski events of cross country skiing and ski jumping.

Alpine Skiing. Alpine skiing is considered the modern aspect of the sport, which developed after 1920. This type of skiing emerged at a time somewhat coincident with the advent of hill skiing throughout the world. It comprises the three separate sporting events of downhill, slalom, and giant slalom ski racing.

Ski Jump. A ski jump is a man-made facility upon which one aspect or discipline of the sport of skiing is practiced. The structure is divided into four main sections, referred to as the inrun, the jump or takeoff, the landing hill, and the outrun. The inrun is that section of the facility which precedes the takeoff portion of the jump itself. The transition of the inrun, and the landing hill, are sections in which the gradient of the hill begins to change from the vertical to the horizontal. The jump or takeoff is the point at which the skier breaks contact with the earth and begins his flight. The landing hill is a well-groomed incline located below the takeoff, upon which the competing skier lands. The outrun of the landing hill is a level portion at the end of the facility upon which the skier terminates his jump.

CHAPTER II

THE CULTURAL SETTING FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF SKIING TO CANADA

I AN OVERVIEW

Throughout the world, skis have been used by man as a means of survival, for recreation and, more recently, in competitive sports.¹ In Canada, skis have been employed almost solely to fulfil a recreational or sporting motive. The possibility exists that in remote areas, and, in specific instances, skis may have been used for a more utilitarian purpose. It has been suggested that skis were used by some of the early miners in the interior of British Columbia as a means of over-snow travel in the winter.² In the mountainous areas surrounding the village of Banff, primitive forms of ski were also rumoured to have been used by prospectors and surveyors, perhaps as early as 1885.³ These occurrences, however, were decidedly limited, and, as a result, we can be reasonably certain that skis were not widely used for this purpose in Canada. Skis, which were adopted by the military

¹C.C. Hamilton, "The Origin of the Ski", British Ski Yearbook of the Ski Club of Great Britain, 1934, p. 534.

²O. Jeldness, "Skiing, the Royal Sport of the North-lands", The American Scandinavian, 1909, p. 5.

³"Enchanted Banff and Lake Louise", Frontier Book Number 10, (Calgary, Alberta, Frontiers Unlimited, 1965), p. 19; Statements, Cyril Paris, Catharine Whyte, Banff, Alberta. Personal interview, July, 1967.

establishment at an early date in most Northern European countries, appear not to have been utilized by the Armed Forces in Canada. One authority has expressed the opinion that in the past, the use of skis by Canadian military personnel for survival or over-snow mobility, "had not been extensive".⁴ No record could be found of any departmental program or policy regarding the use of skis in the Canadian Army, for the time period of concern to this study.

Other than for sport and recreation, skis, it seems, have not fulfilled any great utilitarian purpose in Canadian society. In many European countries this has not been the case, since skis were often the only means of over-snow transportation in the winter. In the United States, skis were used rather extensively for survival and transportation by the prospectors and miners of California, who were reported to have used skis during the gold rush era of 1849.⁶ In Canada, it seems that it was the snowshoe that was to become the most popular device for over-snow travel. It is possible that wooden or plank snowshoes were introduced and

⁴T.M. Hunter, "War on Skis", Canadian Army Journal, Fall, 1961, pp. 26-36.

⁵D.C. Mills, "Snowshoe Thompson", Canadian Ski Yearbook, 1939, p. 94.

⁶D.C. Mills, "California Pioneers on Skis", Canadian Ski Yearbook, 1939, pp. 95-100.

used in North America by the native inhabitants as early as 3000 B.C.⁷ However, in the new world, these wooden snowshoes appear not to have undergone any significant evolutionary development. Modifications that have been made seem to have been due entirely to improvements adopted from the frame snowshoes. This may be contrasted to other similar developments in Europe, where it is suggested that, "it was the wooden snowshoe, which became radically changed by modifications of its inherent cultural traits, until the ski as we know it today was produced."⁸

The origins of Canadian skiing as a recreational pastime or sport is somewhat obscured in our past history of less than a hundred years. Many clubs, individuals, and ski areas currently claim and seek the honour of having been the first to originate, introduce and practice certain aspects of the sport in Canada. Both Montreal and Ottawa in the east, along with Rossland and Trail in British Columbia have made such claims, while in Alberta, the centres of Camrose, Edmonton, and Banff, have presented similar arguments.

We can, however, be reasonably sure that, in Canada, skiing was practiced, perhaps extensively at some time prior to the first recorded reference used in this study. During the mid-eighteen hundred period many people in Canada had neither the time nor the facility to put into print aspects

⁷D.S. Davidson, "Snowshoes", Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1937, p. 144.

⁸Ibid., p. 158.

of their social, recreational or sporting life, in which, to some, skiing played a part. This is particularly true of the Canadian West and parts of rural Quebec and Ontario. Therefore, the true origin likely occurred at a time somewhat earlier than that which has become regarded as the first reference to skis or skiing activity in Canada.

II CANADIAN SPORTING CULTURE PRIOR TO 1900

The Basis of Canadian Sports History

Many of Canada's competitive sports and recreational pastimes have a history dating back into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Skiing has been one of the more recent sports, as it was not introduced until the late eighteenth hundreds. At this time, settlers from many European countries could be found spread across Canada in cities, towns, and isolated settlements. Scandinavian ethnic groups were often attracted to localities where their own culture was predominant. Some sought fortunes in the rapidly expanding mining and lumbering industries, while others looked to the land for agriculture. Settlements developed rapidly, and religious, national, and ethnic groupings were common in most areas. Most of these new Canadians brought with them the sports knowledge and physical skills, which were common and popular in their homeland

Ethnic Groups Influence Canadian Sport

Numerous examples of the nurturing of native sports by

national and religious groups can be found throughout Canada's sports history. Canadian track and field owes much of its early development to the Caledonian Society's picnics and sports days. The English and United Empire Loyalists brought with them a number of their sports and pastimes such as hunting, horse racing, chess, and billiards, which were readily adopted by Canadians. Scottish immigrants introduced curling prior to 1807, when the first club was founded in Montreal.⁹ Today Canada has become one of the leading curling nations in the world. American settlers, coming to Western Canada, brought and popularized baseball around 1900.¹⁰ So it was to be expected that the Scandinavians would practice and promote their sporting interests which centred on skiing. Fisher thus credits the early attempts at teaching skiing as being largely, "the work of Scandinavian immigrants."¹¹

The Scandinavian Influence on Canadian Skiing

It was, in most instances, Scandinavians and, in particular, Norwegians, who first introduced skiing to Canada. They can also be credited with having promoted many of the initial ventures which ultimately led to the formation of ski clubs in communities throughout the country. In both

⁹N. Howell, M.L. Howell, Sports and Games in Canadian Life, 1700 to the Present, (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1969), p. 35.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 281.

¹¹D. Fisher, "Canadian Sporting Prints", The Canadian Forum, Vol. 33, 1953-54, p. 131.

eastern and western Canada, skiing appeared to develop first, in areas that attracted Norwegian, Swedish or Finnish immigrants. In their homeland, skis had been in use for thousands of years as a means of hunting and for transportation during the winter months. The oldest Norwegian ski has been dated at over 4000 years old.¹² As a competitive sport, skiing originated in Norway at a relatively recent date. The first known competition or prized race, reportedly took place at Tromsø, Norway, in 1776.¹³ Ski jumping competitions began in the district of Telemark, near the capital city of Oslo, around 1820. These Norsemen soon became the universal ambassadors of the sport of skiing, taking it with them throughout the world. They have been credited with first introducing skiing to Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas.¹⁴ A group of Australian and Norwegian ski pioneers are reported to have been instrumental in founding what is believed one of the earliest organized clubs in the world for promoting winter sports, including skiing. It was in 1870 that a ski section was formed as a

¹²H.A. Grinden, "More Ski History", American Ski Annual, 1937-38, p. 127.

¹³H. Refsum, D.C.L., "Some Aspects of Norway's Contribution to Ski History," The British Ski Yearbook, of the Ski Club of Great Britain, Vol. IX, No. 18, 1937, p. 9.

¹⁴Sigmund, Ruud, Ski Spor Kryser Verden, (Oslo, H. Asehehoug, and Co., 1938), p. 37.

branch of the existing Snowshoe and Sports Club in the resort town of Kiandra, located in the Kosciusko Mountains of Australia.¹⁵

Winters in Canada presented them with ample opportunity to pursue some form of skiing, regardless of where they settled. As a result, we find evidence in Canada of early skiing in some rather unlikely areas. Since skiing was considered a national pastime and a way of life to these Nordic pioneers, they were quick to seize upon any, and every opportunity to practice. In many cases, they created ski hills and ski jumps, where they could not be found in their natural state.

¹⁵H.H. Schlink, M.B. Ch. M, F.R.G.S., "Skiing in Australia", Canadian Ski Annual, 1930-31, pp. 48-50; Grinden, op. cit., p. 129.

CHAPTER III

THE ORIGIN OF SKIING IN EASTERN CANADA

I AN INTRODUCTION

The Setting: An Eastern Canadian Emphasis

The skiers of eastern Canada were to become the organizationally oriented element in early Canadian skiing. The centres of Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto had a predominant and influential Anglo-Saxon population who were active sportsmen, but in most cases unfamiliar with skiing. As a result, in most eastern areas the sport was first introduced by Scandinavians. The Anglo-Canadian establishment of Ontario and Montreal, along with the French Canadians of rural Quebec and Quebec City, were to dominate the sport in Canada, from a club and organizational point of view. These were the people who became leaders in promoting and building the sport in the East and who, in many instances, left the athletic and technical tasks to the more experienced Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish experts.

Members of the numerous sports clubs and athletic societies in the East soon took an interest in skiing. Skiing thus became organized under the experienced leadership of the many sporting groups already in existence. Skis, for instance, were frequently used by many of the early snowshoe clubs, when members sought a diversion from their regular activity.¹

¹H.P. Douglas, My Skiing Years, (Whitcombe and Gilmour Ltd., Montreal, 1951), p. 12.

After 1900 skiing became popular and many of the original snowshoers continued to practice skiing. This may in part have contributed to the decline in snowshoe interest, which became apparent around the turn of the century. This perhaps may have also contributed to its eventual downfall, as one of the popular winter sports in early Canada.

With the sports club as the centre of eastern skiing, everyone seemed to take part in some aspect of the ski club's affairs. Members could engage in skiing through competitions, hikes, excursions, proficiency tests and lessons. In addition, an interest could be developed in officiating, participating in special projects or organizing club events and social activities, all, of course, related to skiing. The Scandinavians of Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto did not enjoy a monopoly on what was considered by many at that time as a new and exciting winter pastime. Native-born Canadians in the East soon became interested in competitive skiing and many of the top competitors after 1900 had learned their basic skills in Canada.

Though early leadership came from the Scandinavians, it was the English and French Canadian of the East, who organized skiing and encouraged the formation of new clubs. Men such as Thomas Drummond, H. Percy Douglas, C. E. Mortureux, and Champlain Provencher are remembered as great Canadian ski pioneers. Under their expert guidance, the many facets of skiing were given the opportunity to develop. Slalom and downhill racing, touring, scholastic skiing, proficiency tests, ski

safety patrols, ski instruction and international skiing are but a few of the many branches that grew out of their efforts. Skiing in Eastern Canada, as was the case with many other sports, became organized and codified under the direction of the prominent men of society. Leadership came from the military reserve, the universities, and from the business world. According to one source, "these men had the time, money and one must assume, the intelligence, to pursue such activities."²

II A CANADIAN ORIGIN

Montreal to Quebec on Skis, 1879

Skiing, it appears, was not popular nor topical in Canada during the 1870 decade. A review of the winter amusements in progress on what was described as a typical winter's day in 1877 included; indoor skating, curling, snow-shoeing, tobogganing, coasting, sleighing and skating on the river ice.³ Due to the predominance of these sporting activities, it would appear that only an event of dramatic proportion would attract any attention towards skiing. Perhaps it was a desire to gain public recognition for the man on skis that prompted the following event which would historically come to be referred to as the origin of skiing in Canada. An article which appeared in the Canadian

²D.M. Fisher, "Canadian Sporting Prints", The Canadian Forum, Vol. 33, 1953-1954, p. 130.

³The Montreal Gazette, January 7, 1877, p. 4.

Illustrated News in 1879 read, "Mr. A. Birch, a Norwegian gentleman of Montreal, has a pair of patent Norwegian snowshoes upon which he has taken a trip to Quebec starting Friday last. The snowshoes are entirely of wood, nine feet long, six inches wide and have a foot board and toe strap. He walks with the aid of a pole and crosses ice not buoyant enough to bear a good sized dog, so buoyant are the shoes in action."⁴ Accompanying this article was a woodcut illustration depicting a tall black-bearded man dressed in a long overcoat with sash and fur cap. He carried a long single pole in his right hand, which was used, no doubt, for propulsion over flat terrain and as a brake or rudder on downhill grades.

Most Canadians in 1879, did not generally recognize the significance of this event, or of the ability and skill necessary to complete the one hundred and seventy mile journey. However, in the years to come, a greater appreciation of the event would come to be realized. Even today, with modern skis and supporting equipment, it would be considered a major undertaking. Additional references could not be found relating to this achievement nor does there seem to be any further biographical information available on the gentleman in question. Though his appearance on the Canadian ski scene was somewhat brief, this recorded event has become historically significant in that it is the first reference to skiing in Canada.

⁴The Canadian Illustrated News, February 8, 1879.

III EARLY SKIING IN EASTERN CANADA

Montreal, 1881

Around 1880, the appearance of skiers in the parks and hills of Montreal became considerably more frequent. Though specific references are few, there are several reports recalling ski activity on Mount Royal about this time. Thomas Drummond, an early skier and one of the founders of the Montreal Ski Club, writes in *The Canadian Ski Annual* of 1921, that he remembered seeing skiers on the mountain slopes as early as 1881.⁵ Sir Arnold Lunn also writes, "that skis made their first appearance in Canada about the year 1881,"⁶ but makes no specific reference to those taking part in the event. Skiing interest in Montreal at this time was slowly increasing though, according to Douglas, "the sport was still not generally popular".⁷

Montreal, 1889, a City Unique in North America

Montreal, around 1890, was a natural area for the introduction and development of any form of winter sport. It was an urban settlement of some 140,000 people and considered to be the cultural and commercial centre of Canada. Quite

⁵Thomas Drummond, "Early Reminiscences of the Montreal Ski Club", *The Canadian Ski Annual*, (Montreal: 1921), p. 23.

⁶Arnold Lunn, *A History of Skiing*, (London: The Oxford University Press, 1927, p. 31.

⁷H.P. Douglas, "Canadian Skiing", *Skiing the International Sport*, R. Polmedo, ed. (New York, The Derrydale Press, 1937), p. 303.

different from any other metropolis on the North American continent, Montreal possessed an old world charm distinctly flavoured with aspects of frontier Canada.⁸ Climatic conditions favoured winter sports, as the snow which could be expected as early as November would often last until mid-March. One source reported that the heavy snowfalls were in those days "never removed from the main thoroughfares" and, as well, "side roads were completely buried under the wind-swept drifts".⁹ All city traffic was on runners and one could often see "low Burleigh sleighs dashing about the city" as well as "polite French cabbies dressed in coonskin coats". People wore beaver caps, great warm robes and fur coats and the music of sleigh bells could reportedly be heard every day on Mount Royal "as family sleighs passed in endless procession".¹⁰

These were years when Canadian sportsmen took pride in their devotion to the many and varied sporting activities. Many of those pastimes would quietly pass away during the twentieth century while skiing, due to certain technological, political and social forces, was to enjoy widespread growth.¹¹ Mount Royal, situated in the center of the city, became both a

⁸W.D. Lighthall, Montreal After 250 Years, (Montreal: J. Grafton & Sons, St. James, 1892), p. 14.

⁹H.P. Douglas, My Skiing Years, (Montreal: Whitcombe & Co., 1951), p. 12.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹"Winter Carnivals in Montreal", Canadian Geographical Journal, January, 1964, p. 3.

winter and summer playground to many early Montrealers.

"Looking down from its Olympian heights", it was written of the mountain, "it surveyed a sporting scene, unique in the world and unparalleled in Canada's sporting history".¹²

The First Skis in Ottawa, 1887

The first reference to skis in the Ottawa area can be found in the reminiscences of Lord Frederick Hamilton, brother-in-law and aide to the Governor-General, Lord Lansdowne. He is reported to have brought his skis to Canada from Russia in 1887. "With these", it was said, "he practiced skiing on the slopes and toboggan slides of Ottawa".¹³ Among the crowds, which observed the young nobleman display his skiing skills, were probably many of the loyal Ottawa snowshoers. As it was explained, "the prevalent opinion of the majority...., was that skis could never replace snowshoes". "Snowshoes", they emphasized, "were the most practical method known of travelling over winter snow".¹⁴ People in the Ottawa area, then, had a relatively early introduction to skiing, though the sport did not become popular until just after the turn of the century.

¹²The Dominion Illustrated News, February 9, 1889, p. 82.

¹³R.W.E. Burnaby, "From Tree to Trail", Canadian Ski Yearbook 1935, Canadian Amateur Ski Association, (Montreal: May 1935), p. 34.

¹⁴Herbert Marshall, "Historical Outline of the Ottawa Ski Club," Ottawa Ski Club Bulletin, Ottawa, November 11, 1965, p. 6.

"Lord Hamilton", confirms the historian of the Ottawa Ski Club, "seems to have been the first to introduce skis hereabouts".¹⁵

After 1890, the appearance of skiers became more frequent in the area, and on several occasions, were reported seen in Rockcliffe Park, Sandy Hill or on the banks of the Rideau Canal.¹⁶ By the turn of the century, many Scandinavians had taken up residence in Ottawa, which increased both the ski population as well as local interest in the sport. It was not long until the natural ski terrain of the nearby Gatineau area began to be explored as potential ski country. According to Marshall, "there were numerous records and accounts of skiing in the Gatineau Hills by 1897."¹⁷

Skiing Invades the Montreal Snowshoe Clubs, 1887

Interest in skiing appeared in the snowshoe clubs of Montreal as early as 1880. Several clubs reported that their more adventuresome members had found in skiing, "a new source of thrills and enjoyment".¹⁸ Likely one of the earliest attempts by members of the snowshoe fraternity to take up skiing took place on February 10, 1887. Colonel Robert Starke,

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Herbert Marshall, "Historical Outline of the Ottawa Ski Club", Ottawa Ski Club Bulletin, Ottawa, January 14, 1966, p. 12.

¹⁷Marshall, op. cit., p. 7

¹⁸Drummond, op. cit., p. 23.

himself a noted and accomplished snowshoer, described the events of that day in an article written for a Montreal paper.

On Saturday evening a few ubiquitous athletes attacked the Priests' farm near the Montreal toboggan slide with the ski or 'Norwegian Snowshoe'. The start was from the highest point on the other side of Cote des Neiges Road. Of the party two were greenhorns while the third claimed experience which however helped him little. They met all sorts of difficulties and their guiding staffs were of little help. After many adventures they returned home exhibiting their newly acquired skill on St. Catherine Street under the full glare of the street lights, to a large and appreciate audience.¹⁹

Thomas Drummond, discussing this event with Percy Douglas years later, pointed out that many of that "ubiquitous" group found the skis clumsy and very difficult to control. He recalled that "they spent so much time digging themselves out of drifts" and it was generally agreed that they "preferred to use the dependable snowshoe".²⁰ This, it seems, was the opinion held by most of the Eastern snowshoe-men at that time.

Skiing Interest Grows in Montreal, 1889

Skiing interest around Montreal increased steadily during the ten years following Mr. Birch's historic trek. Lunn points out that several McGill University professors took up skiing around 1889 as a regular pastime, "using long Finnish skis with toe straps".²¹ It was soon after this, according to Drummond, "that several private coteries were formed, made up of some of

¹⁹The Montreal Gazette, February 10, 1887, p. 4.

²⁰Douglas, op. cit., p. 15

²¹Lunn, op. cit., p. 32.

the leading citizens of the city."²² These small groups had been organized primarily for the purpose of teaching skiing to beginners.

One of Drummond's early experiences on skis may have been a typical example of the manner in which a novice was introduced to the sport. The event took place in Montreal, on borrowed ten foot skis which were equipped with a primitive toe-strap binding. "We chose Peel Street on a fast night for the first trial,"²³ recalled Drummond and, to his surprise, the sport did not seem difficult. He reportedly survived his initial slide down the hill, however, this success was rather shortlived as half way down on his second run "he performed a spectacular fall," stopping with what was described as, "a dull thud, while his skis continued their journey, bouncing from side to side down the street".²⁴

Winter Sports Interest Dwindles, 1890

There seems to have been a tremendous community spirit and enthusiasm for participation associated with winter sports in Montreal during the period of 1870 to 1890. There were some indications, however, of a general decline in sports participation shortly after 1890. Several reports claim that the winter carnivals became so commercially orientated that their

²²Drummond, op. cit., p. 23.

²³Ibid., p. 24.

²⁴Ibid.

original charm and attraction had been lost.²⁵ Reference was made to the sport of tobogganing in the Dominion Illustrated News of November 7, 1891, and it was referred to as, "one of our good old Canadian sports that went happily along...until our epidemic of carnival bacilli struck it."²⁶ It was generally agreed, that the good points of winter carnivals had been over-stressed and most considered it to have been an, "...exaggeration of a pleasant disease..."²⁷

The interest lag became even more apparent in the sports clubs of Montreal. In order to combat this trend, members of the Montreal Toboggan Club, one of the largest in the city, began to look towards other sporting activities. By 1891, they had almost suspended their tobogganing programme and much of their time was now devoted to skating. Snowshoeing was still popular, though it was also showing similar indications of a lack of interest locally. One report suggested, "Everyone knows that for some years past, snowshoeing has been in the decline".²⁸ The traditional long distance tramps had gradually disappeared from the scene, as more people were attracted to the horse-drawn sleighs as a means of getting to the country. "The old days", it was sadly written, "have melted away".²⁹

²⁵The Montreal Gazette, January 7, 1877, p. 3.

²⁶The Dominion Illustrated News, November 7, 1891, p. 45.

²⁷Ibid., p. 46.

²⁸The Dominion Illustrated News, February 14, 1891, p. 152.

²⁹The Dominion Illustrated News, November 7, 1877, p. 4.

The conditions which prompted winter sports clubs to shift their interests to other activities from the traditional program of snowshoeing and sleighing, may have in some ways helped to popularize skiing. It was during this period that skis and skiing began to capture the enthusiasm of the Montreal public. Skiing offered its exponents something new and exciting. With skis, one combined the mobility of snowshoeing with the excitement and thrills of tobogganing and the speed of skating, along with the desirable social aspects of each. That Montrealers looked favourably upon skiing after 1890 could perhaps be credited to these inherent qualities and prevailing social conditions which encouraged a shift of interest among the athletic clubs of the city.³⁰

Skiing at McGill University, 1899

Skiing had already become moderately established among several of the staff at McGill University when, around 1899, a new and enthusiastic group appeared. Instrumental in promoting the sport at this time were Messrs. J. B. Porter, P. E. Nobbs and R. J. Durley. This group, in 1900, had arranged to spend their Christmas holidays skiing in Finland. Here they were introduced to Finnish skis and ski techniques. When they returned to Montreal, they brought with them several pairs of Finnish skis and the appropriate supporting equipment.³¹ Upon

³⁰Percy C. Nobbs, "Reminiscences", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1927), p. 42.

³¹W. L. Ball, "Early McGill Skiing", History of a Ski Club, Unpublished Manuscript, Ottawa, 1963, p. 3.

his return in 1900, Nobbs wrote about Finland, referring to it as being a long distance ski running country. "The skis commonly used there", he said, "were the result of a long and slow process of evolution, which gave the Finnish people a ski ideally suited to their terrain, snow conditions and needs".³² He described the skis as being "about ten feet long, with a straight groove along the underside, and a very pronounced spring arch in the middle." "For bindings", he explained, "they used a loose toe strap and a piece of sealskin, with the hair set forward". "As for boots", he recalled, "we wore Finnish beef boots, which in spite of their somewhat elegant appearance, greatly surpassed the commercial footwear available in Montreal at the time".³³

In order to avoid the crowds of curious spectators, these McGill enthusiasts preferred to practice their skiing during the late evening hours. The numerous stories and accounts of their experiences serve only to accentuate the enjoyment shared by them, on these outings. "These ski pioneers", according to Dr. W. L. Ball, "would carry their skis up the mountain in preparation for their evening's run". Although the streets at this time were sometimes rolled and ploughed, he points out that "there was no snow removal", and as a result the snow banks on either side of the road could

³²Nobbs, op. cit., p. 42.

³³Ibid.

often be "six or eight feet high".³⁴ Conditions such as this made skiing ideal, and it was not unusual to witness skiers trekking up Mount Royal late at night to ski down the more popular trails located between Pine Avenue and Sherbrooke Street". Some of the incidents that took place on these late evening runs were interesting as well as amusing. Skis frequently came loose and could often be seen "snaking down the hills riderless, with the skier in close pursuit".³⁵ On one occasion, a dog was reportedly "transfixed by a runaway ski", and Percy Nobbs jokingly told of sleighing parties that were rudely disrupted by a "lone skier diving into their midst".³⁶ Montreal skiing, prior to 1900 did, it appears, experience a number of inherent problems, foremost perhaps being the relatively few but active participants. Skiing was not generally considered popular at the turn of the century, as the estimated number of skiers it was said, "did not exceed one hundred".³⁷

Eastern Ski Equipment, Pre-1900

In Canada three types of skis were being used at this time. The most popular, it appears, were the Norwegian Hagen style skis with a huitfeldt binding, and the long Finnish skis

³⁴Ball, loc. cit.

³⁵Douglas, op. cit., p. 16.

³⁶Nobbs, op. cit., p. 42

³⁷Ibid.

with toe strap bindings. The third type were rather crude copies of either the Norwegian or the Finnish models which were manufactured locally. Needless to say, these early Canadian models lacked the quality and workmanship of those that were imported. They did, however, serve to partially satisfy the ever increasing demand for ski equipment.

"For Canadian skiing, there is no compromise between the two types of ski", Percy Nobbs told Douglas, referring to Norwegian and Finnish models, "as each is a highly specialized instrument of locomotion".³⁸ The Finnish ski was designed for flat, open country, and as a result, was not easily adaptable to the thickly wooded hills of Montreal and the Laurentians. It was described as "artistic and elegant, and limited to use on level ground..."³⁹ In spite of this inadequacy, over half of the skiing population of Montreal in 1900 used the Finnish ski.⁴⁰

The success and growth of skiing in Eastern Canada during the next decade could in part be attributed to the increase in the quantity of European equipment available through local distributors and merchants. Several lines of Canadian-made skis could also be obtained at more reasonable prices. With ski equipment becoming readily available, the

³⁸Douglas, op. cit., p. 17.

³⁹Nobbs, op. cit., p. 42.

⁴⁰Ibid.

natural terrain near the centres of Ottawa and Montreal, and favourable climatic conditions, assured the ski enthusiast of 1900 ample opportunity to pursue skiing either as a sport or recreation.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORIGIN OF SKIING IN WESTERN CANADA

I INTRODUCTION

The Setting: A Western Canadian Emphasis

In Canada's West, the situation differed from that which existed in the East in several respects. First, there were no large urban centres except Vancouver, with suitable ski terrain nearby. When introduced into most parts of the West, skiing did not readily gain the support of large segments of the population. The existing sporting environment in most communities, it seems, did not encourage the introduction of new sports. This was not the case in the Eastern centres, such as Montreal, where sports clubs had already established a tradition in the community.

Western skiing first began in the more or less remote areas that had attracted Scandinavian settlers, and offered access to suitable ski country. The towns of Rossland, Trail, Phoenix and Revelstoke were typical industrial and mining centres to which Scandinavians had come both from Europe and the United States.¹ Many of the settlers who came to the West were already established athletes and many were proficient skiers.² To the general public in these towns skiing was not considered a recreational sport, since their prime occupation

¹Personal Correspondence, The Revelstoke Ski Club, Revelstoke, B.C., May 1967.

²L. H. Whittaker, The Golden City, (Rossland, The Rossland Miner Ltd.; 1949), p. 12.

was mining, lumbering and prospecting. Skiing in these areas was thus pioneered primarily by small groups of active sportsmen, and the only loyal following they managed to attract were large boisterous crowds, "who came to watch their daring exhibitions of ski jumping".³

Early skiing in the West lacked the traditional club atmosphere of its Eastern counterpart. It lacked, as well, the resulting interest in club recreational skiing. They concentrated primarily on the competitive aspects of ski jumping and, to a lesser extent, cross country and mountain ski racing. Clubs, when formed, were smaller and orientated more to the competitive skier. It appears that they did not attempt to promote skiing on a large scale, but preferred to have the public watch their skiing exhibitions. These sports events could be witnessed on the giant natural ski jumping hills of Revelstoke, Rossland and Trail and on the ski jump towers that rose ominously above the prairie skylines of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Club rivalry was quick to develop in this atmosphere and competitions were hard fought. There can be no doubt that their sporting interest was sincere and intense, as reports of early competitions will indicate. Chris Gottaas relates that, "we were always on the lookout for any newcomers who could ski,"⁴ and he describes what might

³Ibid.

⁴Personal Correspondence, Chris Gottaas, Camrose, Alberta, July 17, 1967.

well have been the general philosophy of early skiers in the West by suggesting that, "their prime concern was to get together with a group of skiers, have a meet or contest, then a party, all rather spontaneous and wild."⁵

II A WESTERN ORIGIN

Revelstoke, 1891

It is rather difficult to affix the origin of skiing in Western Canada to either a specific place or time. However, most authorities suggest an origin somewhere in the West Kootenay District of British Columbia at some time after 1880. However, equally strong claims can be made by areas surrounding the communities of Rossland and Trail, as well as Banff, Alberta. As early as 1890, skiing activity was known to be prevalent throughout many centres in the interior of British Columbia. A group of Scandinavians in the town of Revelstoke, British Columbia, were reported to have held a formal meeting in 1891, which resulted in the founding of the Revelstoke Ski Club. This club then, appears to have been the first formal ski organization in Canada.⁶

Rossland and Trail, 1895

Rossland's famed Red Mountain also attracted skiers to

⁵Ibid.

⁶C.E. Price, R. Greene, Report of the Red Mountain Ski Society, (mimeographed material, Rossland, B.C., 1965), p. 2.

its natural ski slopes at an early date. It is reported that "as far back as 1888, Canadian ski pioneers organized tournaments to be run off the natural ski terrain of the mountain."⁷ The entire Kootenay District was at this time enjoying a period of rapid economic growth and prosperity. Rossland, in the year 1890, was reported to be, "a bustling city that had grown out of the virgin mountainside in the remarkable span of five years."⁸ The numerous gold and copper strikes that were made provided unlimited opportunities for the numerous miners, settlers and fortune seekers. At this time, these thriving communities were considered to be the "melting pots of the world."⁹ In 1890, over \$30,000,000 in gold was reported to have been taken from Red Mountain alone, and it was estimated that in the Rossland area, some eighty miles of mine workings were valued at over \$1,000,000 a mile.¹⁰

The Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company, which became the major industry, has had a significant role to play in the economy of the area. It was the ore from the Rossland Mines which fed the giant metallurgical smelters at Trail, situated two thousand feet below on the banks of the Columbia River. The Red Mountain Ski Club Society in 1965 proudly related that, this rather unusual combination of population,

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹The Victoria Daily Colonist, February 1, 1898, p. 2.

¹⁰Price, op. cit., p. 2.

industry, and accessible ski country, plus enthusiasm and initiative, naturally led to the Red Mountain of today, "which was now populated by skiers instead of miners".¹¹

There were many excellent skiers among the miners of Rossland and Trail in those early days and these pioneers may be credited, in part, with laying the foundations for competitive skiing in Western Canada. It has been said that, in 1895, an organized ski club existed in the Rossland area. This club, one of the first in Canada, would be predated only by the ski club founded at Revelstoke in 1891.¹² These early clubs were active in a variety of winter sporting ventures which were not limited to skiing. The infrequent downhill ski races, ski jumping competitions, exhibitions of skill and sporting demonstrations, sponsored by the club, ultimately led to the organization of the Rossland Winter Carnival, first held in 1898.

Olaus Jeldness, Ski Champion, 1897

Informal ski races were no doubt held prior to 1897 but the first major ski competition in Canada was recorded as a downhill ski running event, which started from the summit of Red Mountain. That first historic race, held on March 6, 1897, was won by Rossland's Olaus Jeldness, "a noted mining

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

engineer and sportsman in the town".¹³ The race itself, was in essence, a primitive form of what we know today as a downhill race. Jeldness, being an expert skier, reportedly "made the run down Red Mountain from the summit to the Black Bear Compressor House in five minutes".¹⁴

Jeldness was an unusual, as well as an outstanding figure in the frontier community of Rossland, B.C. The magic of the Jeldness name today evokes memorable stories and recollections of early ski events among the ski fraternity in British Columbia. The almost legendary stories, whether fact or fiction, provide us today with an insight into some of the life and sport of the time. Jeldness, it is said, "started skiing in his native Norway at a very early age".¹⁵ When he was just fifteen years old, he made a successful ski jump of ninety-two feet in a small village in the Nordmore district of Norway. This feat gave him the existing world's record and according to one source, "this record stood until 1888", when it was reported, "the famous Hemmestved brothers had leaped over one hundred feet".¹⁶

He arrived in Rossland when he was twenty-nine years of age and was quick to gain a reputation as one of the most capable and respected mining men in Western Canada. Earlier

¹³Yearbook of the 9th Annual Convention, Northwest Mining Association, Spokane, Washington, February 1898, p. 47.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Price, op. cit., p. 4.

experiences gained as a mining superintendent in Colorado in the United States assisted him in developing a number of successful mining ventures around Rossland.¹⁷ Besides being renowned as a skier and miner, the founding of the Rossland Ski Club was largely a result of his inspiration. He, apparently, was an individual of many talents and one of our pioneer sportsmen of whom we know all too little. For his many contributions to competitive skiing, it would not seem inappropriate to consider Olaus Jeldness as the "Father of Competitive Skiing in Canada".¹⁸

The Rossland Winter Carnival, 1898

Rossland became well known for its winter carnival and for the many sporting and social events that took place. Special carnival trains brought people from all over Western Canada and the United States to the interior of British Columbia for the occasion. The competitive events themselves attracted entrants and teams from Butte and Denver in the United States and from Revelstoke and all parts of the prairies in Canada. The first carnival "promised to be a great success", and was planned as a "gala two day affair, over the weekend of February 17, 1898".¹⁹ Several championship events were proclaimed by the carnival organizers, among

¹⁷Yearbook of the Ninth Annual Convention, Northwest Mining Association, Spokane, Washington, February 1899, p. 47.

¹⁸Price, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁹The Victoria Daily Colonist, February 1, 1898, p. 2.

them, the Ski Running and the Ski Jumping championships for the Dominion of Canada. Provincial championships were scheduled in hockey, curling, snowshoeing and coasting, as it was felt these events represented the major winter sports of the time.

A large number of impressive trophies had been donated for all of the competitive events and this, it was felt, "would help to attract the best competitors in the West."²⁰ Among the contributors was Mr. T. K. Blackstock of the War Eagle Mine, who had donated "a cup of Kootenay Silver"²¹ for the ski jumping event. Competitors in the ski running or downhill event were eligible for the MacIntosh trophy, donated by Mr. C. H. MacIntosh. It was said, "that the Le Roi Company" was also prepared to contribute "a costly flagon" for the snowshoeing event.²²

Snowshoeing was perhaps more popular than skiing in those days, and the first carnival saw no less than "two hundred snowshoers lined up for the opening parade".²³ The snowshoe courses were usually laid out and flagged by the Reverend Henry Irwin, better known as Father Pat. This colourful clergyman, a remarkable pioneer character, participated fully in all community activities, as well as attending

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Whittaker, op. cit., p. 19.

to ministerial matters. Winning the snowshoe race was considered a great civic honour and it was written that "Father Pat did not think it derogatory to the cloth to have a drink at the bar with the winner".²⁴ Fred Wells, founder of the town named after him, reportedly won the first carnival cross country snowshoe race and graciously joined the padre for his drink. For this and for many other virtues, Father Pat was beloved and long remembered by the people of Rossland.

The ski running event of 1898 was to extend from the top of Red Mountain to the Black Bear Compressor area, a distance of about one and one half miles, with a vertical drop of about two thousand feet. Unfortunately, poor snow conditions prevailed, and the race was shifted to a shorter course on Monte Cristo Mountain.²⁵ Ski jumping events were planned as the main spectator attraction at the Rossland Winter Carnival in 1898 and, as expected, interest in this event tended to dominate the other activities. Visitors enjoyed the spectacle for it was reported that most of the spectators considered it to be both "good entertainment and good sport".²⁶ Olaus Jeldness emerged as the winner of the carnival ski jumping event and with it won the War Eagle Trophy, which represented at the time, the Ski Jumping

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵The Victoria Daily Colonist, February 1, 1898, p. 2.

²⁶Personal Correspondence, Mr. J. D. MacDonald, Rossland Historical Association, August, 1967.

Championship of Canada.²⁷ He had earlier been awarded the MacIntosh Trophy for winning the Downhill Ski race, which, combined with his prize in jumping, earned him the title of Canada's first ski champion.²⁸

Near perfect snow conditions in 1899 brought the downhill race back to Red Mountain and the competition was again won by the now famous Olaus Jeldness with a record time of three minutes and five seconds. Second and third places went to gentlemen by the names of Solstad and Bjornstad,²⁹ which seemed to indicate a slight Scandinavian monopoly. The MacIntosh Trophy, awarded to the winner of the downhill ski race, was presented for the last time to Olaus Jeldness, who had won the event three years in succession. The trophy was retired in his name and the following year, Jeldness himself donated a new trophy for that same event and this time it was suitably named the Jeldness Ski Trophy.³⁰

Downhill Ski Running, 1900

These early downhill ski races, held on Red Mountain, differed slightly from today's controlled alpine events. The race started at the summit of the mountain and ended on the main street of the town. A few of the more enthusiastic supporters would line the long mountain route, while most of the spectators gathered along the main street. The course

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸The Victoria Daily Colonist, February 1, 1898, p. 2.

²⁹Whittaker, op. cit., p. 20.

³⁰Ibid.

itself, "was as natural as a mountain trail could be and it is believed to have come straight down the southeast slope of the mountain".³¹ No flags guided the racers or controlled their speed and the trail was neither prepared nor packed. As a result, casualties on the race course were frequent. All competitors in the event started together and the racer crossing the finish line first, was declared the winner. Their skis were described by one source as being longer than those in use today and fitted loosely to the feet. Speed was controlled and turns initiated by checking with the aid of a single long pole, which was apparently dragged as a rudder since it was "partly cut open at the end to dig into the snow".³²

The Social Element, in Western Skiing

In Western Canada, the role of the social events related to skiing and ski competitions had, from the very beginning, been significant. Ski banquets were popular civic functions, at which time, many interesting and amusing stories tended to immortalize the great skiers and events of the day. Most of the great skiers soon became as famous for their feats at the banquet table as for their exploits on the ski hill. Perhaps one of the most remarkable social events, associated with skiing, took place at Rossland and, needless to say, it

³¹The Trail Times, Red Mountain Ski Club Edition, November 17, 1965, p. 30

³²Ibid., p. 32.

has since become part of the Jeldness legend.

Rosslund, during the 1890's, became noted for its festive occasions. It had become the custom that local citizenry joined together from time to time to honour those who had achieved prestige in the community. Often banquets would be held to proclaim or commemorate a special event, of which there were many. The banquet soon became a means of gaining temporary status and personal recognition from the local community, with the result that each succeeding host attempted to improve and better the other.

One of these unique social events in Western Canada was the "Jeldness Tea Party."³³ It was written "that in order to celebrate a recent personal success" Jeldness decided to host a banquet at the summit of Red Mountain, a location known to be one of his favourites. "He had just sold the Velvet Mine for a reported \$75,000" and according to a Trail Times' reporter, "that meant a celebration with a capital C".³⁴ It was realized, in view of the record of earlier banquets, that Jeldness would have to extend himself and so an invitation was sent in his own handwriting, "to twenty-five of the Golden city's social elite".³⁵ It read, in part, "Mr. Jeldness requests your company to celebrate his very good

³³L.H. Whittaker, "Tea, 5070 Feet Up", The Vancouver Daily Province, (Magazine Section), December 18, 1948, p. 3.

³⁴The Trail Daily Times, Red Mountain Ski Club Edition, November 17, 1965, p. 16.

³⁵Whittaker, op. cit., p. 3.

fortune at a banquet to be held on top of Red Mountain".³⁶ This open invitation contained no explanation as to how the summit was to be reached, or by what route the guests were expected to travel. However, most of them managed to reach the announced rendezvous, as Jeldness had meticulously arranged guides and helpers to assist the party to the prescribed place. The task assigned to the guides "was to ensure that all guests were well fortified on the climb as they toiled upwards towards the summit". It was reported by one, "that he found a bottle under his hand every time he fell in the snow".³⁷

When the bulk of the party had reached the 2000 foot summit they were welcomed by the host, and ushered into the cabin to enjoy what was described as "a royal repast".³⁸ The banquet was a jubilant affair, with the guests enjoying both the food and beverages, which they consumed profusely. The climax to the feast is aptly described in the Trail Times, "as the merry makers were each given a pair of skis and with two hoops of joy and unwarranted optimism, they set off down the mountain in a flurry of snow".³⁹ According to one newspaper report, "members of that famous tea party would carry marks

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷R. Goodchild, "Rossland Skiing History, is Punctuated with Hilarity", The Vancouver Sun, January 9, 1953, p. 13.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Trail Daily Times, Red Mountain Ski Club Edition, November 17, 1965, p. 16.

of that wonderful evening for the rest of their lives".⁴⁰

The famous tea party soon became history but the tradition of banquets as part of Western ski competitions prevailed, though few have matched the uniqueness of the one held on Red Mountain in 1899.

Skiing in Alberta, 1887

Skiing in Alberta likely began in the mountainous terrain surrounding the village of Banff. The first to use skis in Canada as a means of transportation and for survival were likely the Scandinavian prospectors exploring the country around Banff prior to the arrival of the railway.⁴¹ There is evidence of skis being used around Banff in 1887. Scandinavian axemen, working on railway construction crews around Silver City, a short-lived mining town west of Banff, are reported to have made skis by hand and used them on the job during the winter months. They were described "as being hand hewn from a pine tree, with an additional piece of wood nailed to each ski for boot plates, extra strength and thickness".⁴² There apparently was no evidence of either camber or ski harness. Jim Morrison of Banff, in examining these skis, describes one of them "as having a felt sole nailed to the boot plate".⁴³ This perhaps explains the absence of a harness

⁴⁰Whittaker, op. cit., p. 3.

⁴¹Cyril Paris, "Early Skiing in Banff", (Unpublished paper, Banff, Alberta, 1965).

⁴²The Calgary Herald, January 26, 1940, p. 11

⁴³Ibid.

since the skier would simply nail his felt workboots to the ski, leaving the heel of the boot free.

The First Skis in Banff, 1894

Cyril Paris claims that his father, George Harrison Paris, was the first to use skis in the village of Banff. These, he points out, "were sent to my father by a Norwegian friend from North Dakota".⁴⁴ This individual had, in 1893, been attracted to Banff by the presence of the mineral hot springs and had been a guest at the Brett Sanitorium Hotel, where the elder Mr. Paris worked. On observing the interest in snowshoeing among several of the sportsmen of Banff, and in particular, the enjoyment of George Paris, the American visitor promised to send back skis which, he assured them, "would make it much easier to get around".⁴⁵

The skis, as promised, arrived during the winter of 1894, and are claimed to be the first used by a resident of Banff and, perhaps, one of the earliest appearances of skis in Alberta.⁴⁶ These same skis were used by a number of adventuresome individuals in Banff and, on one occasion, included John Tolson, who along with a Mrs. Smithson and her brother, are depicted enjoying the popular winter sport of tobogganing, snowshoes and skiing in a photograph taken in 1894.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Paris, op. cit.

⁴⁵Statement, Cyril Paris, Banff, Alberta, July 1967, Personal Interview.

⁴⁶Brad Kilb, "A History of Winter Sport in Banff, Alberta", Unpublished Paper, The University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1968.

⁴⁷Paris, op. cit., p. 2.

CHAPTER V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKIING IN QUEBEC AND THE MARITIMES

1900-1940

I SKIING IN EASTERN CANADA

Introduction

Ski developments in Eastern Canada at the turn of the century were primarily centred on recreational ski touring and pleasure skiing. However, as ski clubs became established and organized, new trends and techniques soon developed. Coincident with this, was an increased interest in the competitive ski events. This situation created a need for improved organization at the district and national level. To this end, it was to be the older and established clubs of Quebec and Ontario which first began working towards improving this situation. These initial efforts finally led to the successful formation of the Canadian Amateur Ski Association in 1920. It is this organization that has given structure and direction to all aspects of skiing in Canada.

II SKIING IN THE MONTREAL AREA AFTER 1900

Mount Royal, in the heart of the city, according to Douglas, "provided local outdoor enthusiasts, with a wealth of wooded trails and steep gullies, which in winter became a skier's paradise". He continues to point out "that one could spend endless days touring the mountain, all the while enjoying the gorgeous views of the St. Lawrence, and the

distant Laurentian Mountains".¹ The skiers shared the natural facilities of the mountain with numerous snowshoe, toboggan and sleighing groups, who frequented the hills on winter afternoons. New residents who came to Montreal after 1900, were perhaps introduced to the sport of skiing in a fashion similar to the early experience of H. Percy Douglas. He was initially attracted to snowshoeing and tobogganing, which were considered to be the traditional winter sports in that city. "One Christmas", he relates, "my son was given a pair of skis". After the first outing, his son excitedly returned home, saying, "Dad, you must buy some skis, it's wonderful!"² It was the next morning that the elder Douglas purchased a pair of Norwegian Hagen skis with huitfeldt bindings and started off on what was described as his "greatest adventure".³

The pioneer skier of the 1900 era appeared vastly different than his counterpart today. What would be considered basic ski knowledge today, such as wearing lightweight clothing, had not yet been learned by most. Douglas again provides an adequate description. "In those days", he recalls in his memoirs, "we wore high boots, riding breeches or heavy knickers, woolen underwear, sweaters and over all

¹H.P. Douglas, My Skiing Years, (Montreal: Whitcombe and Gilmour Ltd., 1951), p. 17.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

this, a gaily colored mackinaw, finished off with woolen or fur mitts and a pull-down cap."⁴ Ski poles were not in general use, except by some experts who used a single, large pole. This device proved invaluable to its exponents, who would use it for support, propulsion, or to steer with on the steeper downhill runs. Ski wax was apparently not used, though the skis were often waterproofed by treating them with linseed oil or turpentine.⁵

The Montreal Ski Club

In order to meet the increasing public demand for organized skiing in the Montreal area, the formation of a ski club seemed the solution to many of the problems. For several years, a group of local skiers had met, from time to time, to discuss skiing and the possibilities of forming a club. Such a club, they argued, might work towards the development of a more suitable ski area in the city, and to encourage skiing as an activity for the general public. The decision to form a club was taken in the fall of 1903, when, according to one source, "C.B. Waagen and other lovers of good sport, held a meeting in Montreal".⁶ At this gathering a committee was appointed to prepare a suitable constitution for the proposed club, which could be considered early in the

⁴Ibid., p. 18.

⁵Ibid., p. 19.

⁶Thomas Drummond, "Early Reminiscence of the Montreal Ski Club," The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1921), p. 23.

new year. A formal proposal to form the club was made at a subsequent meeting, called for February 11, 1904. "This meeting was well attended", recalled Tom Drummond, "as a report descriptive of skiing at the time was read and those present were enrolled as members".⁷

The brief, as presented, summarized the existing ski situation in Canada and suggested several recommendations for improvement. The Montreal Gazette reported that the prime objective of the new club, "was to promote the sport of skiing in all its varied aspects".⁸ To this end the development of nearby skiing facilities, as well as initiating a ski instruction programme, were considered vital to their future success. Accordingly, the Montreal Ski Club officially came into being in 1904, as the first organized ski club in eastern Canada. It is significant to note that over fifty members signed the club's charter at the first meeting. Many of these same individuals would later emerge as the leaders of organized skiing in Canada. The far-reaching influence of the Montreal Ski Club was destined to spread throughout Quebec, Ontario, and to Canada's western provinces. Several prominent gentlemen of the city were elected to the club's executive at that first meeting. Among them were E. S. Clouston, as Honourary President, C. J. McCuaig, as President, and P. E. Nobbes and J. D. Kerr as Vice President and Secretary-

⁷Ibid.

⁸The Montreal Gazette, February 12, 1904, p. 6.

Treasurer.⁹

Skiing at the Montreal Ski Club, 1904

During the early years of the club, skiing was restricted primarily to Saturday afternoons and Sundays. In speaking of the extent of ski activity at this time, Douglas wrote that, "There were few regulars...possibly a dozen of us who met regularly at the cross roads of the mountain".¹⁰ Among this small band of Montreal Ski Club enthusiasts were Harold Barnard, Harvey Gibson, Jerry Furling, Don Barber, Murray Badgley, Stuart Nichol, Edward Keilly and Huntley and Tom Drummond.¹¹

From the very beginning, the Montreal club promoted and sponsored both ski jumping and ski touring events, and later initiated weekend trips to the Laurentians. Few areas in Canada enjoyed more favourable conditions than those available to the Montreal Club. "Skiing", it was reported, "offered its followers, the combined pleasures of tobogganing, snowshoeing and skating". It was also suggested "that when the delights and excitements of skiing become better known, it would even surpass the current popularity of the more traditional winter pastimes."¹²

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Douglas, op. cit., p. 17.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²The Montreal Gazette, February 12, 1904, p. 6.

Skiing Extends to the Laurentians

During 1904 and 1905 most of the skiing in Montreal took place on, or near, Mount Royal, in the heart of the city. At this time pleasant ski runs could be enjoyed on the weekends and during the evenings, with a stop at some convenient spot for lunch or supper.¹³ As the city expanded, the availability of runs became somewhat restricted and the ski club began to look to the Laurentians for expansion. One of the first weekend trips, or expeditions, as they were often referred to, took place in 1905, when a party of four took a trip to St. Agathe. Here a ski-run to Shawbridge, a distance of some thirty miles, proved to be the highlight of the weekend.¹⁴ More frequent visits were made in 1906 and 1907, but as suitable overnight accommodation was difficult to obtain, the general public was more or less excluded. In 1908, the Manitou Club, located only seven miles from St. Agathe, offered its clubhouse to the Montreal Ski Club, and for several years many enjoyable trips were taken by members of the club.

Ski interest had, by 1910, generally spread northward, and a competitive ski club was now operating at St. Agathe. Members of the Montreal Ski Club reportedly assisted them in sponsoring a successful jumping competition in 1912. Accord-

¹³Thomas Drummond, "Review of the Montreal Ski Club", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1921), p. 24.

¹⁴Arnold Lunn, A History of Skiing, (London: The Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 34.

ing to Drummond, "the village lads...could jump well, and to see them flying about on primitive skis made of barrel staves and boards was a surprising sight".¹⁵ By 1913, even St. Agathe had become congested by skiers, and soon club trips were extended to include St. Margarets and Shawbridge.

During the 1912-1913 ski season, Tom Drummond published one of the first Canadian ski periodicals entitled, "The Ski Runner in Canada".¹⁶ Much of what has been recorded in the early days of Montreal skiing can be credited to his publication, for it was not the habit of most skiers of this time to record their experiences on paper or in print. He was also one of the early skiers to tour the Laurentians, and is credited with having prepared many accurate maps of the ski trails in the Laurentian Mountains. With his headquarters at Mrs. Marshall's famed boarding house in Shawbridge and with the assistance of an ingenious device made by him to record distance and direction, Drummond would set out on his snowshoes for St. Agathe. The "contraption" he used was described "as consisting of a bicycle wheel, mounted between a pair of very short skis, and equipped with a cyclometer and compass".¹⁷ According to Douglas, it was unfortunate that many of Drummond's original maps were used to decorate the walls of the boarding house and as a result

¹⁵Drummond, op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁶Douglas, op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁷Ibid.

they soon disappeared.

Ski Jumping in the Montreal Ski Club

The most popular form of competitive skiing, practiced during the first decade of the century, was ski jumping. In the Montreal Club, as in others across the country, the ski jump became the focal point for most ski activity, and many eastern clubs existed solely to support the jump and a small group of enthusiastic ski jumpers. In Eastern Canada, ski jumping tournaments were the only forms of ski competition held until well after 1912. In Montreal, a small jumping hill was built on Fletcher's Field near Mount Royal Avenue, and it was here, on February 13, 1904, that the first official ski competition in Eastern Canada took place.¹⁸ In this historic event, both a Canadian and a Norwegian class were contested, with the distinction being made solely on the basis of one's nationality. It was reported that, "The fine exhibition of jumping aroused great enthusiasm among the crowd".¹⁹ With a jump of 49 feet, Mr. C. Christianson won the Norwegian class, while C. Martin took the Canadian honours with an equally fine effort of 44 feet.²⁰

During the summer of 1905, a more suitable site for a

¹⁸S. A. Davidson, "A History of Games and Sports in Eastern Canada Before World War I" (Unpublished Thesis, Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1951), p. 131.

¹⁹H.P. Douglas, "Canadian Skiing, "Skiing The International Sport, Roland Palmedo, ed. (New York: The Derrydale Press, 1937), p. 304.

²⁰Douglas, loc. cit.

hill was located on Westmount Boulevard. The hill, on Fletcher's Field, had been a successful venture, and had demonstrated the potential of the sport but, as Drummond stated, "a jump of any great distance was impossible".²¹

One of the earliest ski enthusiasts in the Montreal Club was Thomas Drummond, who began his skiing career around 1880, and was regarded as both a fine skier and competitor. Until his death on December 22, 1921, he had been instrumental in the support of Canadian skiing as a founder, competitor, and finally, as president of the Montreal Ski Club. He provided a vivid description of a jumping experience on the Westmount Boulevard hill in 1905.

The start was from the flagstaff on the top of the mountain with a sharp descent to the takeoff. The signal was a bugle call and in a few seconds the competitor, with more courage than skill, took a sliding drive from the top of this formidable structure and landed on top of his head about forty feet away. He ploughed a great groove in the snow, but was unhurt.²²

Drummond fails to identify the individual but suggests this to be a sincere first attempt at a somersault jump. Also it was in 1905 that Huntley Drummond first won the Montreal Ski Club Jumping Championship,²³ and he is reported to have continued winning numerous ski competitions until 1918. The Canadian Courier, of 1907, carries a picture of Drummond

²¹Drummond, op. cit., p. 26.

²²Ibid.

²³D. Batchelor, "Skiing in Canada", Canadian Geographical Journal, Vol. 14, (February 1937), p. 56.

performing before a large crowd of admiring onlookers.²⁴ Ski jumping soon became established as one of the city's major sports attractions, and in Montreal the tournaments began to draw rather large crowds. It was pointed out in 1909 that ski jumping was one of the most spectacular sports, and articles supported by pictures of skiers were frequently featured in the popular publications of the day.²⁶

Ski Jumping at Cote Des Neiges

During the summer of 1909, the growth of the city and the increased interest in ski jumping demanded that a new ski site be found. An excellent hill was secured on Cote des Neiges Road, and above it a wooden scaffold soon appeared, on what was to become Montreal's most famous ski jump. During the winter carnival of 1910 John Rudd of Minneapolis, one of the visiting jumpers, delighted spectators by successfully performing his famous skiing somersault on the new jump. As with most Canadian areas, Montreal always attracted a large number of Norwegian ski jumpers. The more notable of these in the Montreal Ski Club were, "Waagon, Slettum, Pryty, Olsen and a gentleman named Ostbye",²⁷ who was the Norwegian champion

²⁴ _____, "Winter Sports", The Canadian Courier, Montreal, Vol. 1, No. 8, (January 19, 1907), p. 16.

²⁵ _____, "Ski Jumping", The Canadian Courier, Montreal, Vol. 5, No. 12, (February 20, 1909, p. 13.

²⁶ _____, "Skiing in Montreal", The Canadian Courier, Montreal, Vol. 17, No. 14, (January 8, 1910), p. 18.

²⁷ Douglas, "Canadian Skiing," Loc. cit.

of 1913. Among the more prominent Canadians, who learned their jumping from these Scandinavian experts, were "the three McKinnons, H. R. Drummond, E. L. Wilson, T. Varty and G. Sharing".²⁸

Cross Country Racing

Interest in cross country skiing was stimulated by the introduction of club ski tests over measured courses in 1913. This was soon followed by the inaugural Mount Royal Cross Country Ski Race, first held on January 17, 1914, and claimed by many to be the first in Canada.²⁹ The race, over a measured course of about six miles, was laid out entirely on the mountain with the start and finish strategically located near Lumpkin's Hotel, an establishment noted throughout Eastern Canada for its hospitality and social events related to winter sports. By 1915 there were many Scandinavian cross country skiers in Montreal and their enthusiasm soon rubbed off on local athletes. Always attracting the top competitors in Ontario and Quebec, the Mount Royal Cross Country Race became an annual fixture and one of the winter's top sporting events.

Ladies' Skiing in Eastern Canada

The ladies appear to have started skiing almost as early as men, though they were, for many years, a minority

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹The Montreal Gazette, January 17, 1914, p. 7.

of the skiing public. No reference could be found to women having been elected to office among the records and reports of ski clubs. Evidence of their interest in skiing can, however, be found in numerous magazine articles, in pictures, and in the recollections of ski pioneers. The participation of women in the sport prior to the First World War was tolerated, but only in a very few instances were they encouraged to take an active role in the club affairs. The Canadian Courier of 1908 carries a photograph of a group of ladies who appeared on skis in Quebec City during a winter carnival. From their attire and equipment, one could assume they were reasonably experienced skiers.³⁰ The same publication, in 1909, carried an illustration of a "pair of enthusiastic lady skiers",³¹ at a similar carnival in Montreal.

Pleasure Skiing, Popular Among the Ladies

The Montreal Ski Club is reported to have occasionally held cross country ski events for ladies but these did not prove popular until well after 1920. In Eastern Canada, lady skiers remained relatively few in number, and were seldom seen in the company of men. In the early days of Laurentian skiing, Douglas could not recall "skiing with any girls".³²

³⁰ _____, "Winter Sports in the City of Quebec", The Canadian Courier, Montreal; Vol. 3, No. 13, (February 29, 1908), p. 11.

³¹. _____, "Ski Jumping", The Canadian Courier, Montreal; Vol. 5, No. 12, (February 20, 1909), p. 13.

³²Douglas, My Skiing Years, op. cit., p. 67.

Few, if any, entered the competitive events of which only the cross country or flat race was considered suitable.

Among the first girls in Montreal to take up skiing seriously were Allison Aird, Ruth Aird, Audrey Thorne and Emily Yates, who frequently skied on the slopes of Mount Royal around 1910. Percy Douglas recalled seeing this group of ladies on one occasion in 1909, as he and a number of male companions were skiing on the mountain.³³ The girls, it seems, were able to demonstrate to their male counterparts an impressive degree of skiing proficiency and, it was said, "they had the audacity to pull kick turns on us and a telemark, something we had been trying to learn all season."³⁴

Ski Techniques

It is interesting to examine the ski techniques of the day, as compared to modern concepts where alpine skiing principles tend to influence what is currently practiced. In the 1900 era, it was the ski jumping discipline which influenced the techniques of recreational skiing. The results of a rather general survey of illustrations and pictorial representations in the popular press at the time, tend to support this view. Skiers at this time were depicted in a variety of positions and situations reflecting the popularity of ski jumping. Douglas, in speaking of the technique of the

³³The Montreal Gazette, April 7, 1944, p. 6.

³⁴Douglas, loc. cit.

day, said, "we all skied about the same...we learned to stem, to keep control, and if our dependable telemark failed, we sat down and hoped for the best...accidents were surprisingly few...we quickly learned how to fall, and the old-style bindings gave us every chance to recover safely".³⁵

Most Canadian ski clubs enjoyed the benefit of at least one Norwegian ski expert, and the Montreal Ski Club was no exception. Douglas pays tribute to these Norwegian members of the Montreal Club, who, he says, "were always willing to assist beginners, and eager to teach Canadians the proper techniques of jumping and cross country skiing."³⁶ Frequently on their ski trips and journeys up north, these same Scandinavians "would tote huge rucksacks", crammed with what was described as "marvellous, strange food, which they would eat at frequent intervals",³⁷ often much to the dismay of the more exclusive members of the club.

In 1914, the Montreal Ski Club first introduced tests of skiing proficiency.³⁸ These tests, they hoped, would encourage members to learn the proper techniques of turning and encourage them to practice ski safety. Test items included telemark and christiania turns, small hill jumping and a cross country race against time. Club badges of gold, silver and bronze were awarded to those who were successful.

³⁵H.P. Douglas, My Skiing Years, (Montreal: Whitcombe and Gilmore Ltd., 1951), p. 17.

³⁶Ibid., p. 19.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., p. 22.

Skiing in Montreal after 1920

H. Percy Douglas was elected president of the Montreal Ski Club in 1920 and was faced with a rather disorganized group of about fifty members. It was nevertheless a significant year, as negotiations with the exclusive Park Toboggan Club had resulted in skiers gaining access to their clubhouse on Mount Royal. For the first time, the Montreal Ski Club enjoyed the luxury of a clubhouse in the city. These new and inviting quarters were credited with attracting over two hundred and forty members that first year, of which thirty-two were ladies.³⁹ As a result of the increased interest among ladies, the social aspect of skiing was enhanced, and the club's program expanded to include dances, simple meals, refreshments, weekend trips, moonlight ski parties, and special ski events for juniors. In 1921, the famed Cote des Neiges' property was purchased by the club through the sale of shares in the Montreal Ski Club Realty Co. A special grandstand for spectators was built, and improvements made to the landing hill, which would ensure the safety of the competitors. In that same year individual membership more than doubled, as close to five hundred were registered, including eighty-six ladies and one hundred and thirty-four juniors.⁴⁰

It was not until well after 1921 that most of the ski

³⁹Batchelor, op. cit., p. 57.

⁴⁰Douglas, op. cit., p. 22.

clubs in Eastern Canada began to attract a significant number of women to their competitive ski events. Women, in most instances, were expected to accept the competitive conditions prevalent for the men's events and, as a result, little encouragement was offered to them to take part. The Montreal Ski Club is reported to have officially held its first ladies' cross country race on March 3, 1923.⁴¹ This event was scheduled as one of the regular club fixtures and thereafter, was held annually. Percy Douglas recalls some of the early competitors as being; "Misses Smith, MacKinnon, Lehan, Geary, Halloway and Alice Johannsen". In describing some of these early races, at which he frequently acted as an official, he points out that, "they were quite short, about three miles long, starting from the foot of the Cote des Neiges Jumping Hill and finishing at Lumpkin's Hotel".⁴²

During the latter part of the 1920 decade, concern over the financial future of skiing was being voiced in numerous club reports to the C.A.S.A.⁴³ Though interest in skiing continued to grow in Montreal and throughout the country, the skiing emphasis in Eastern Canada began to shift toward more active participation in recreational skiing.

⁴¹H.P. Douglas, "The Development of Ladies Racing", The Canadian Sport Monthly, Vol. 36, No. 9, (1950), p. 10.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Minutes of the Canadian Amateur Ski Association, 1921-1935, Original Documents, held by the National Ski Museum Committee, C.A.S.A. National Office, Montreal, Quebec.

Hill skiing, the development of Laurentian ski resorts, along with the increased social aspects of both, resulted in a gradual decline in the spectator support for ski jumping. The ski jump events had for years provided most clubs with the financial resources to support the non-spectator portion of their program. By 1931 jumping events in the city were generally becoming unprofitable ventures. This loss of revenue, coupled with the increased costs of expanding the club program, resulted in an annual financial crisis. This recurring situation became so serious that by 1933 the club was forced to cease operations after twenty-nine years.⁴⁴ The Montreal Club, it appears, had been unable to keep pace with the more recent developments in the sport, and their attempts to keep up had led to costly over-expansion. Also, a shift in the Montreal ski population to the Laurentian Mountains and the developments there resulted in little support for skiing within the city. These factors, along with a general decline of ski jumping interest, contributed to bringing an end to one of Canada's great skiing institutions.

Great Athletes of the Montreal Ski Club

The Montreal Ski Club attracted many great skiers during the 1920 and early 1930 decade. It would be beyond the scope of this study to pay a just tribute to all of them, but among the more outstanding would be the names of ski jumpers,

⁴⁴The Montreal Gazette, April 7, 1944, p. 6.

J. Norman Berger, Rolf Sivertsen, Leonard Lehan, Art Gravel and Percy Bott, plus cross country ski expert, Erkki Pentilla.

Norman Berger was born in Norway in 1894, in the village of Eidsvold, not far from Oslo, the country's capital city. He started skiing at the age of five, and was reported to have entered his first jumping competition when he was ten. In this first meet he finished ninth, but later that same year won the first of many ski jumping titles. Arriving in Montreal in 1917, he did not begin skiing in Canada until after the war, when he joined the Montreal Ski Club in 1920. Having already gained a reputation as an outstanding junior ski jumper in Oslo, he soon became equally noted for his athletic ability in Montreal. As a frequent winner of jumping competitions throughout the United States and Canada, Berger had the distinction of winning the Canadian Ski Jumping Championship an unprecedented three times in succession. "This remarkable feat", according to Douglas, "is a record that will probably never be equalled", as he won the Waagen Bowl for jumping in 1924, 1925 and 1926.⁴⁵

Leonard Lehan and Arthur Gravel were two Montreal born ski jumpers who gained a measure of fame for having represented Canada at the Norwegian Ski Festival at Holmenkollen as well as other meets in Europe during 1926. In 1927, competing at

⁴⁵H.P. Douglas, "J. Norman Berger", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1925-1926), p. 22.

the Dominion Championships, Lehan became the first native Canadian to win the National Ski Jumping title, with his friend and rival, Art Gravel, a close second by less than a single point.⁴⁶

Rolf Sivertsen was another ski jumping great of the Montreal Ski Club. He had originally come to North America from Norway and had gained competitive ski experience in the United States before settling in Montreal. He won his first Dominion Ski Championship in 1928, and followed with a second title in 1930 in what was a close contest with J. Nordmoe of Camrose, Alberta. Percy Bott was perhaps the youngest Montreal skier ever to win a Dominion ski title twice. His first victory came in 1934, when, "as a slim youth of sixteen years, he defeated an international field", and captured the now famous Waagen Bowl, representing the ski jumping championship of Canada.⁴⁷ Bott was the youngest skier to ever hold a national senior ski title. It was said that he had competed in senior Canadian ski events since his twelfth birthday, when he reportedly won the St. Maurice Valley Senior Ski Jumping Championship.⁴⁸

Erkki Pentilla first won the Canadian Amateur Cross

⁴⁶_____, "Report of the Seventh Annual Tournament", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1926-1927), p. 19.

⁴⁷H.P. Douglas, "Report of the Fourteenth Annual Championships", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal, Quebec: 1934), p. 5.

⁴⁸Ibid.

Country Championship in 1930, a year after his arrival in Canada from his native Finland. Born in 1905, he was considered one of the better racers at the Savanlinnan Club of Helsinki. Having started skiing as a child, he won his first race in an open schoolboy competition when he was just thirteen. On March 2, 1930, he easily won the first Canadian fifty kilometre cross country race from Shawbridge to St. Marguerite and return, finishing over twenty minutes ahead of his nearest rival.⁴⁹ He became known as the Flying Finn and won the Dominion Cross Country event three times, repeating in 1932 and 1933. He undoubtedly would have won the event in 1931, but that year the championships were held in the west and skiers from the east were not represented. He nonetheless won all of the major races in the east that year as proof of his cross country skiing superiority.⁵⁰ He returned to Finland shortly after this, and left Canada with an enviable and remarkable record, "of never having been defeated".⁵¹

III THE RED BIRDS, PIONEER SKIING IN THE LAURENTIANS

The Red Birds Ski Club 1927

It was D. Stuart Forbes, Manager of Athletics at McGill, who first conceived the idea of a graduate sports club

⁴⁹H.P. Douglas, "Erkki Pentilla", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec, 1930-1931), p. 23.

⁵⁰H.P. Douglas, "Montreal Ski Club Inc." Canadian Skiing, (Toronto, Ontario: 1931), p. 11.

⁵¹H.P. Douglas, "Erkki Pentilla", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1930-1931), p. 23.

at the university. The organization evolved out of a number of informal meetings and discussions held during the year of 1927, when it was finally agreed that "Colonel Bovey, Major Forbes and the 1928 graduates of the ski team would form a club the following year".⁵² The Red Birds Ski Club became a reality in 1928, when it was officially founded as a graduate ski club at McGill University. The first meeting of the club, held on March 13, was reported in the McGill Daily of March 19, 1928, as the formation of the "Red Wing Ski Club",⁵³ an error due to an earlier disagreement regarding names for the proposed club. In its first year of operation the club was to be directed by a committee of W. S. Thompson, H. S. Maxwell, A. H. Pangman and Colonel Wilfred Bovey.

The first official meeting of the club was held on November 1, 1928, when elections and plans for the approaching ski season were made. Colonel Robert Starke was chosen as Honourary President, along with President W. B. Thompson, Vice President A. H. Pangman, and Secretary-Treasurer W. B. Mackenzie. The objectives formulated by the founders were outlined by the new executive as being, "to promote skiing and eventually snowshoeing and speed skating in Canada".⁵⁴ For a

⁵²W. L. Ball, "The Red Birds of St. Saviour", History of a Ski Club, Unpublished manuscript, (Ottawa: 1963), p. 45.

⁵³The McGill Daily, March 19, 1928, p. 3.

⁵⁴Ball, op. cit., p. 45.

nominal fee of one hundred dollars, the club had secured a clubhouse near the base of the St. Saveur ski hill. It was from this headquarters that the young club operated a complete ski program including the modern disciplines of slalom and downhill skiing. It was proclaimed, in 1929, that the Red Birds "were a one hundred per cent active ski club",⁵⁵ a situation which they continued to maintain through the ensuing years. In order that graduates might continue their association with competitive skiing, and the McGill Ski Team, the club's program became coordinated with that of the McGill Winter Outing Club. Considerable progress was made in their initial year, which culminated in the Red Birds being granted the honor of hosting the Intercollegiate Winter Ski Union Championships for 1929.

By what is considered by some to be a somewhat "unique combination of opportunity and inclination", the Red Birds assumed a leading role in the development of alpine or hill skiing in Canada, though it is reported, "no formal decision was made to do so".⁵⁶ Even though the Red Birds tended to specialize in the alpine ski events, they were nonetheless almost always among the strongest exponents of the jumping and cross country disciplines.

⁵⁵W.B. Thompson, "The Red Birds", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1928-1929), p. 5.

⁵⁶Ball, loc. cit.

The First Ski Tow in North America 1929

The first ski tow on this continent made its appearance in 1929, when, "Alex Foster set one on the Big Hill at Shaw-bridge".⁵⁷ This primitive looking device would, in a short period of time, revolutionize skiing in Canada and throughout the world. This ski tow is described by Ball "as consisting of a rope passed over the rear wheel of an old car propped up at the bottom of the hill".⁵⁸ The rope was joined at both ends and extended up the hill on a series of pulleys made from old car wheels, which were attached to posts. He goes on to explain, "Alex ran this contraption as much for his own amusement as anything", since he apparently charged patrons a nominal fee of "twenty-five cents".⁵⁹ There were no safety gates or other precautions and skiers would leave the tow at a small levelled section near the top, which sometimes was considered a "tricky move", as top speed for the tow was estimated at "about twenty-five miles per hour".⁶⁰

Early Red Bird Expeditions to Mont Tremblant

For some time prior to 1930, members of the Red Bird Ski Club had been active in exploring the Laurentian Mountains in an attempt to discover new and challenging ski runs. Most

⁵⁷H. Pickins, "Alex Foster", Canadian Sport Monthly, January 1964, p. 11.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ball, loc. cit.

⁶⁰Ibid.

of these expeditions were led by Herman Smith Johannsen who had previously travelled extensively throughout the area, both in summer and in winter. On one winter trip to Mont Tremblant, "he was accompanied by Harry Pangman and George Jost",⁶¹ who were also eager to locate a suitable site upon which to develop an extended ski run for slalom. It is believed that they were the first to recognize the future ski potential of Mont Tremblant, and to propose that it be developed as such.⁶²

The first official ski expedition to Mont Tremblant for the purpose of skiing took place on April 13, 1930. The details of the journey are duly recorded in the club records of the Red Birds Ski Club. Accordingly, the first winter ascent of the mountain was recalled as, "a tough experience", by the members of the party, which included, "the Jackrabbit, his dog Caesar, Sterling Maxwell, Neil Stewart and Harry Pangman".⁶³ They are reported to have spent the night in Tom Wheeler's log cabin near the summit, as the ski run down the mountain had been scheduled for early the next morning. This historic event was described by one observer as a "bushwacking adventure", in which a fifty-five year old expert "led the descent through heavy forest and a multitude of natural obstacles".⁶⁴ "It was on that occasion", says Ball, "that the

⁶¹H.P. Douglas, "The Story of Tremblant", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal, Quebec, 1939), p. 102.

⁶²Ball, loc. cit.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Douglas, op. cit., p. 103.

Jackrabbit displayed his bag of bushwacking tricks".⁶⁵ His descent down through the thick bush of the mountain called for tactics seldom seen or heard of in skiing, as he clutched and slid along spruce trees, as well as resorting to "pole riding, tobogganing, and dragging one ski, a rather complicated braking manoeuvre no one else had mastered."⁶⁶ The next year, on April 6, 1931, a semi-official ski race was held as ten skiers were attracted to the top of the mountain.⁶⁷ This pioneering group was again led down a more or less prescribed course, set by the same Jackrabbit Johannsen, who recorded what was the winning time of twenty-five minutes, to capture what had become known as "the first Red Birds Race on Mont Tremblant."⁶⁸

Great Ski Men Among the Red Birds

Members of the Red Birds Ski Club of McGill have played significant roles in almost every aspect of Canadian skiing. Since its formation, the club became influential in promoting new ideas and projects while still supporting the older traditions which they felt were in the best interests of the sport. The Canadian Amateur Ski Association, collegiate skiing, scholastic skiing, ski instruction, ski

⁶⁵Ball, loc. cit.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Douglas, loc. cit.

coaching, ski exploration, and all levels of the competitive ski events, whether local, national or international, have enjoyed the benefits of Red Bird ski interest.⁶⁹ Men such as Dr. W. L. Ball, A. H. Pangman, W. B. Thompson and George Jost have biographical histories that would complement any study of the subject in Canada.

Skier of the Twentieth Century

Likely the greatest Red Bird of them all was Herman Smith Johannsen, better known as "the Jackrabbit".⁷⁰ Though he had never attended McGill as a student, an honorary life membership was bestowed upon him following his contribution to the Intercollegiate Winter Sports Union Championship of 1929, held at Murray Bay.⁷¹

The "Jackrabbit", was born on June 15, 1857, in the village of Hosten, Norway. It has been said that he was first placed on skis at the age of two, and followed this experience with extensive participation in school cross country and ski jumping competitions. Around 1890, when what Scandinavians refer to as the original slalom was being practiced in the Telemark district of Norway, Johannsen "learned to run the real slalom". In those days, he recalled, "it was run over and

⁶⁹Ball, loc. cit.

⁷⁰W.L. Ball, "Miracle Man of Skiing", The Canadian Skier, (Canadian Sport Monthly), January 1966, p. 11.

⁷¹Statement, W. L. Ball, Ottawa, June 1967, personal interview.

around such natural obstacles as boulders and trees". In 1894, he graduated from the Royal Norwegian Military Academy as a Second Lieutenant and was posted to the University of Berlin in Germany to study engineering. It was during this time that he helped to pioneer skiing on the European continent. He was reported to have made the first successful ascent with skis on the Brocken, one of Germany's highest peaks, in 1894.⁷²

Following his graduation from the University of Berlin in 1899, he came to America to work with the Brown Hoisting Machinery Company of Cleveland, Ohio. He again brought with him his skis, which were the first seen in that city. The next few years a great deal of time was spent travelling throughout the West Indies, Cuba, Norway and other parts of Europe. Upon returning to North America in 1915, he settled in Lake Placid, New York, where he is credited with being one of the founders of the famed Snow-birds Ski Club of Lake Placid. He continued to pursue his interests in skiing and outdoor life by pioneering many of the initial touring expeditions into the Sarnac Lake area.⁷³ In 1929 he moved his family to Montreal and began what was to become a long and illustrious association with skiing in Canada through his interests in the Montreal ski club and the Canadian Amateur Ski Association.

⁷²Ball, loc. cit.

⁷³W. L. Ball, "The Jackrabbit", Unpublished paper, (Ottawa, 1963), p. 4.

Johannsen is credited during the 1920 decade with setting many of the first slalom courses seen in North America. He was also equally adept at providing instruction and in demonstrating the necessary techniques required to successfully negotiate the obstacle-covered courses characteristic of the time. The first Canadian slalom course was believed set at Shawbridge in 1928 by Johannsen, and the honor of setting the first Dominion Slalom at the same site in 1929 also went to the Jackrabbit.⁷⁴ In 1933, he assisted Fred Pabst with the installation of the first rope tow in the St. Saveur area. By 1935, with the assistance of maps produced by Thomas Drummond, he had cut and marked the now famous "Maple Leaf Trail",⁷⁵ from St. Agathe to Shawbridge. He had, by this time, also been instrumental in clearing and cutting of the Kandahar and Taschereau ski runs on Mont Tremblant, as well as smaller runs at St. Agathe, St. Marguerite, St. Saveur and Shawbridge.

It was after 1935 that the great commercial interests began to look to the lucrative Laurentians and other northern and eastern areas for investment and development, related to skiing. The Jackrabbit's skiing and engineering experiences were soon in great demand as new and aggressive developments

⁷⁴_____, "Minutes of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Amateur Ski Association", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1928-1929), p. 13.

⁷⁵W.L. Ball, "Miracle Man of Skiing", The Canadian Skier (Canadian Sport Quarterly), January 1966, p. 11.

such as those at the Seigniory Club, Lac Beauport, Mont Tremblant, Orford and Gabriel in Quebec, as well as Collingwood in Ontario, and Whiteface in New York, owe much to his foresight, judgment and advice.⁷⁶

An enthusiasm for competitive skiing remained with him as he continued to enter ski competitions, though after 1930, he was restricted to cross country racing events. In 1936, at the age of sixty-one, he entered and won a five-mile veterans' race, and ten years later he placed third in a ten-mile race from the top of Mount Mansfield to the town of Stowe, Vermont. When he was seventy-five, he entered what has been considered his last official race. Competing in the Red Birds Club Championships of 1950, he placed a remarkable fifth in what was considered a strong field of twenty-two college students and graduates, some of whom were considered to be of senior "A" calibre.⁷⁷ In 1966, he was honoured by his native country, when he was invited to be the guest of honor at the famed Norwegian Ski Festival at Hommenkollen, near Oslo. Here he was accorded the tribute of being addressed as the "Norwegian-Canadian, who had pioneered skiing in Norway, Europe and America". A close friend and admirer, Dr. W. L. Ball of Ottawa, wrote of Johannsen, stating

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷W.L. Ball, "The Jackrabbit", Unpublished paper, Ottawa, 1963, p. 4.

"that sometimes a man becomes a living legend; the sport of skiing has produced many intrepid pioneers and champions, but it is doubtful if there has ever been a ski man who has pushed his trail so far and so illustrious as has the Jack-rabbit of Piedmont, Quebec."⁷⁸

IV SKIING DEVELOPMENTS THROUGHOUT QUEBEC

Quebec City 1905

It has been reported that skiing was introduced to Quebec City long before the Quebec Ski Club was founded. This honour, it appears, goes to the Norwegian consul, a Mr. Johnnie Schwartz, who is reported to have practiced skiing in the city around 1900.⁷⁹ His skis are described by F. W. Russell as being "about ten to twelve feet in length, almost flat, with a slightly turned up toe, with a wooden footplate, leather toe cap, and usually a lamp wick for binding".⁸⁰ These skis, it seems, were rather primitive in form, difficult to turn, and reportedly had to be taken off to reascend the hills.

The ski enthusiasts who were influential in advocating the formation of a ski club for Quebec City included Mr. Ernie L. Wilson and Mr. F. W. Rand, both ardent skiers and jumpers.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹M. DeHouk, "Skiing Around Quebec City", The American Ski Annual and Skiing Journal, National Ski Association of America, Roger Langley ed., (Worcester, Massachusetts: 1949) Vol. 34, No. 1, p. 26.

⁸⁰F. W. Russell, "The Story of the Quebec Ski Club", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal, Quebec: 1936), p. 81.

Though the club existed in 1905, the first regular meeting was not held until 1907. At that time eight local ski enthusiasts attended what became the founding meeting, held at the Chateau Frontenac Hotel. Among the initial members were "E. L. Wilson, C. Lynch, H. L. Stovely, P. Turcott, E. A. Judin, W. Thorburn, A. S. Scott and F. W. Russell."⁸¹

Club activity centred on weekend exploration trips, utilizing nearby Boy Scout huts as clubhouses or resting stations. An occasional out-of-town journey to Boischatel served to satisfy the more adventuresome. The first ski jump was a simple snow structure, located in the rear of the old Ross Rifle factory, on the Cove fields, facing the targets. Experts considered thirty feet to be a long jump, and in the club's first competitions no mention is made in reference to jumping style. A second jump, with a wooden chute, was soon built near Wolfe's Cove. The chute soon dwindled away, apparently due to a shortage of firewood in the area. Allan Birset and Cliff Fletcher were reported as frequent winners at club tournaments during these early years of the club. The Army and Navy veterans' quarters served as an adequate clubhouse until increased membership forced a move to improved facilities at the Chateauvert residence on the St. Foye Road. Cross country skiing in the club was encouraged by the donation

⁸¹Ibid.

of a large silver plaque by Albert E. Seifert.⁸²

Developments After 1919

During the war years club activity all but ceased until 1919, when Cliff Fletcher spearheaded a drive to reactivate the club. In 1921 the Quebec Ski Club proudly took its place as one of the founding clubs in the Canadian Amateur Ski Association. A fine new jump had been constructed in 1929, by Ivind Nelson of Revelstoke, on Sandy Bank. Annual tournaments, with jumping and cross country events, became an annual feature in the club's program.

In 1927 a branch club was formed at Loretteville by Major E. Blondeau, and regular trips to St. Anne de Beaupre became popular.⁸³ A programme of ski trail development was expanded in 1928, which included the development of a wilderness trail in the Montmorency Watershed area. Junior development was given club consideration under the direction of Mr. Donald McQuat, who was one of the club's most enthusiastic trail skiers around 1930. The club continued to operate both a competitive and a recreational program through the next decade. The future of hill skiing received support, when in 1937 through the efforts of John Blair and the Public Winter

⁸²F.W. Russell, "The Quebec Ski Club," The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1926), p. 34.

⁸³F. W. Russell, "The Quebec Ski Club Report", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec, 1927-1928, p. 37.

Sports Association, a ski tow was built.⁸⁴ With this, hill skiing emerged and a competitive emphasis on downhill and slalom soon became popular. It was also not until after 1930 that the Quebec club appeared to attract French Canadian members. By 1935, most of the executive positions were held by French Canadians, and club reports and correspondence were submitted entirely in French. As one of the founding clubs in the Canadian Amateur Ski Association, the Quebec Ski Club had by the year 1940, contributed considerably to the development of skiing, and with the formation of ski clubs in the province of Quebec and throughout Canada.

Shawinigan Falls - 1908

Skiing in this area was comparatively unknown until around 1907 when R. A. (Bob) Witherspoon began skiing on a pair of Norwegian skis. He was encouraged to take up the sport by Mr. A. J. De Cew of the Montreal Ski Club, who apparently sent him the first pair as a gift. From this introduction, skiing began to attract enthusiasts until a ski club was formed in 1908. Witherspoon was elected the club's first president, ably assisted by a committee made up of Dr. E. E. Cross, M. Munro and T. Y. Yates as the Master of Ski Runs.⁸⁵

A Norwegian resident of the area, Mr. Ole Thung,

⁸⁴W. L. Ball, "The Red Birds of St. Saveur". History of a Ski Club, Unpublished Manuscript, (Ottawa, 1963), p. 53.

⁸⁵Douglas, op. cit., p. 24.

joined the club around 1910, and his knowledge and experience in the sport inspired the efforts of other members. His leadership in cross country skiing made it a feature of the club program. He is credited with building several small jumps, and of instructing members of the club in the art of ski jumping. In spite of this beginning, cross country skiing still attracted most of the attention, and a permanent jump was not built until 1937.⁸⁶

Trois Riviere, 1911

The honour of pioneering skiing in two Eastern Canadian centres goes to Ernie Wilson. After founding the Quebec Ski Club in 1908, he moved to Trois Riviere in 1911 and was able to attract enough support for a ski club there. Among those on the club's executive committee were "E. C. Smith, S. B. Gayford, G. E. Baptiste, and E. C. Bourke."⁸⁷ The original name of the club in Trois Riviere was the St. Maurice Valley Ski Club, which joined the C.A.S.A. in 1924. However, in 1925 the name was changed to the Three Rivers Ski Club. They operated an extensive instruction program for beginners, and attracted people to the club by regularly staging exhibition ski jumping demonstrations to crowds estimated at over three thousand. On February 27, 1927, an eight-mile cross country race was reportedly held by the club, which by then boasted a paid-up membership of two hundred and fifty. A new jump, on the Cap

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷H.P. Douglas, "Club Reports", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1925-1926), p. 46.

Aux Camielle Hill, was built in 1927, where jumps of over 175 feet were possible. It became a popular site of many provincial and regional championship ski events. It was reported that at the provincial meet in 1928, over 4,000 spectators watched forty of the province's top performers. Bertel Papske of the host club won the jumping, and Bud Clark of Ottawa, the cross country. The original jump tower accidentally blew down during the summer of 1929 in a windstorm, but it was not long until a new, improved tower appeared, ready for the first snow-fall.⁸⁸

Club de Ski Mont-Royal D'Amerique 1917

This unique club had a rather interesting origin, as it was specifically organized "to foster skiing among the French Canadians in the province of Quebec".⁸⁹ Founded in 1917 by the great French Canadian sports enthusiast, Champlain Provencher, it was splendidly financed by outstanding French Canadian business and sportsmen. Its membership was small, but exclusive and international, as it affiliated with the Alpine Club of France. Part of their program was to attract young French Canadians to the sport, and to this end ski demonstrations were held throughout the province during the 1920 decade. What was considered to be the classic event of

⁸⁸H.P. Douglas, "Club Reports", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1929-1930), p. 52.

⁸⁹_____, "Report, Club de Ski Mont Royale D'Amerique", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1927-1928), p. 36.

the 1920 season was a night masquerade ski jumping exhibition, held on the Cote des Nieges ski jump, and witnessed by more than 4,000 spectators.⁹⁰ This event, they claimed, was the first of its kind to be held in America, if not in the world. In addition to this feature, the formation of affiliated branch ski clubs was encouraged throughout the country.

Among the more famous was the branch club founded in 1924 at East End, Saskatchewan by Stan Rough. This branch boasted an impressive initial membership of twenty-five.⁹¹ Other branch clubs were the Chicago branch, headed by Lionel McGrowan, and the Quebec City branch, under the direction of Wilfred McGrowan.⁹²

A French Canadian Emphasis

From the very beginning the club stressed the importance of an early introduction to skiing. Consequently, they were particularly interested in school age children and in promoting junior ski competitions. The club executive held the opinion that the C.A.S.A. was not promoting Canadian skiing in the most effective way, especially with respect to French Canadian interests. Under the leadership of Provencher, the club embarked on an unconventional programme, quite

⁹⁰ _____, Official Ice Hockey Guide and Winter Sports Almanac, C. Provencher, ed., Spalding, Athletic Library, (Montreal, Quebec: 1927), p. 116.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² _____, Club de Ski Mont Royale D'Amerique, The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1930), p. 32.

different from most clubs. According to the club report in 1930, "they had not concerned themselves with any individual or group prestige".⁹³ which they claimed as a common occurrence in many of the other clubs of that day. Instead, they dedicated themselves to the task of disseminating useful skiing knowledge among scattered groups in rural and urban communities and schools.

By 1925, the club had acquired quarters in the Laurentians at Mont Rolland. Weekend trips became popular, and soon this area became the hub of club activity. They inaugurated the Mount Royal twenty-two mile cross country race, as well as the St. Agathe to Mont Rolland Relay. This last event, for the J. R. Gaunt trophy, was only open to native Canadian skiers. They appear to have been successful in achieving most of their aims for as early as 1932, skiing they reported, had become a major sport in many schools and colleges in the province of Quebec.⁹⁴

Unique Ski Clubs Develop

Many of the ski clubs that appeared after 1920 were somewhat unique in that they were formed to satisfy a specific purpose and as a result, attracted a rather select membership. Besides the ski club with its open membership and standard

⁹³ _____, Report, Club de Ski Mont Royal D'Amerique, The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec, 1930), p. 32.

⁹⁴C. Provencher, "Club Reports", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal, Quebec: 1934), p. 111.

competitive, instructional and social programs, several exclusive organizations with restricted programs began to appear throughout Eastern Canada.

The Loyola Ski Club, founded in 1921, was another club intent on developing skiing among the French Canadians of old Quebec. In 1925, they reported a membership of over three hundred, with a strong competitive interest in both ski jumping and cross country ski running.⁹⁵ The Hawksbury Ski Club, founded in 1922, was a club that considered skiing to be the most natural sport for Canadians and advocated that it be considered a National Sport. Its main benefactor and first President was a Mr. C. B. Thorne, who had donated a clubhouse and a series of ski trophies which were awarded annually by the club.⁹⁶

The Laurentian Cross Country Club was founded in 1928 and located its headquarters at "Cochands Chalet", near St. Margarets.⁹⁷ The original membership was made up of a small mixed group, who had been skiing nearby in the Laurentians for several years. It was their president, Dr. A. R. Diefendorf, who had been instrumental in its founding and in the

⁹⁵ _____, "The Loyola Ski Club", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1926-1927), p. 32.

⁹⁶ _____, "The Hawksbury Ski Club", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1926-1927), p. 33.

⁹⁷ C. Provencher, "The Laurentian Cross Country Club", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1930-1931), p. 41.

subsequent activities of the club. The main emphasis appeared to be in cross country and trail skiing, and to this end, by 1931, over sixty miles of ski trails had been cut through the forests surrounding the village of St. Marguerite.

In 1930, Captain A. H. D'Egville, a noted British ski expert, as well as an author of a book on modern skiing, founded a rather exclusive ski club known as the "Timber Wolves of Murray Bay".⁹⁸ The club was organized on a similar basis to the Kandahar Ski Club of Murren, Switzerland. Membership in the club was somewhat conditional, in that the grade of membership one achieved depended on the classification given to one's skiing ability. The club remained quite small as it appealed to only a small minority of "class conscious skiers", who insisted that "style was the most important aspect in skiing".⁹⁹

Lucerne-in-Quebec, once the mansion of Louis Joseph Papineau, was an estate of some eighty thousand acres, which was opened as a private members ski club in 1930. It was to become a planned community club, and the project appeared to be directed by The Honourable Charles Dunning who, in turn, appropriately named it "The Seignior Club".¹⁰⁰ It was the intent of the club to operate throughout the entire year, with

⁹⁸ _____, "The Timber Wolves Ski Club", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1930-1931), p. 4.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ C. Provencher, "Lucerne in Quebec", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, Quebec: 1930-1931), p. 70.

a program of "golf, hiking, skating, tobogganing, bobsleighing, and ski jumping".¹⁰¹ It was for this part of their program that they acquired the services of Ivind Nelson, of Revelstoke, B.C. He acted as the club's ski instructor, teaching the skills involved with what was considered to be "a most exciting sport".¹⁰² By 1937, the club had acquired the services of a resident ski professional. Peter MacKinnon of Montreal, a former Canadian champion, assumed those duties associated with instructing and advising members in all matters relating to skiing.¹⁰³ Membership in the Seignior Club was not open to the public, and applications were subject to certain unpublished social and racial restrictions. Requests for membership were first considered and approved by the Board of Governors, and then voted upon by the membership. Charter memberships in 1935 were estimated to cost between \$2,500. and \$3,500., depending on where the property acquired by the prospective member was located. Ordinary membership consisted of an initiation fee of \$250., and an additional \$125. annual club fee.¹⁰⁴ For the restrictions that were imposed and the membership fees, this club remained one of the more exclusive in Canada.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³_____, "Ski School", The Seignieur, Vol. 8, No. 12, Winter, 1937, p. 30.

¹⁰⁴C. Provencher, "Memoranda on Club Membership", The Seignieur, Vol. 8, No. 10, December 1935, p. 5.

V SKIING IN THE MARITIMES

New Denmark 1917

In the Maritimes, skiing appears to have first been introduced in the area north of Fredricton in New Brunswick. "It was here that around 1917 skiing began in the Maritimes".¹⁰⁵ According to E. S. Bergh, many Scandinavian immigrants had settled in this area, and although the settlements were predominantly Danish, "two or three Norwegian families could always be found among them".¹⁰⁶ The ski club at New Denmark, New Brunswick, is likely the oldest in the Maritimes, as it was founded shortly after 1917. Most of the early ski activity was restricted to the immediate area surrounding the village. Skiing interest did not extend to other areas in the province and the sport enjoyed rather local enthusiasm. Many of the settlers were reported to have made their own skis, patterned crudely after those they had seen in their homeland.

Informal jumping and cross country events were popular, as several small snow jumps were located throughout the area. On weekends during the winter, many local skiers would spend their afternoons on these jumping hills. Around 1920, the first permanent ski jump appeared, located near the village of New Denmark.¹⁰⁷ Though it has been modified throughout the

¹⁰⁵Personal correspondence, M. M. Neilson, September, 1967.

¹⁰⁶Personal correspondence, E. S. Bergh, August 8, 1967.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

years, the same hill is still in use, operated by the New Denmark Ski Club.

St. John, 1920

Efforts to start a ski club at St. John, New Brunswick, began around 1920. Several skiers in the area persuaded Mr. O. Magnusson, the local ski authority at the time, to help them organize a club. The club located its skiing headquarters "at Lilly Lake in Rockwood Park", and "officially began operation in 1921".¹⁰⁸ Concentrating on cross country and ski touring, they did not have a ski jump, and club interest appeared vested in small, individual touring groups, who explored the nearby countryside on weekends. This organization pioneered skiing around St. John until 1925, when it disappeared from the scene, likely due to its non-competitive interests. It seems they did not require an organized ski club in order to enjoy the benefits of ski touring.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKIING IN ONTARIO

I SKIING IN THE OTTAWA AREA 1900

Ottawa 1900

In Ottawa, after 1900, skiing in Rockcliffe Park was a regular feature on winter afternoons. This hilly area, during the long winter months, became a natural haven for ski enthusiasts living in or near to the city. Even though, at first, it was the ski jumpers who gained the publicity, it was the cross country skiers who attracted the greatest following, and in the opinion of many, was considered the most popular activity.¹ Fred Burpee is thought to have been one of the first to organize and conduct organized ski trips in the area surrounding the city, and in 1903 he was reported to have led several ski excursions "across the Ottawa River and into the hills of East Templeton".² About the same time, William Steward initiated ski trips from Kirk's ferry to Ottawa, over what became popularly known, "as the long bush trail".³ By 1909, several Scandinavians had become established in the community and a considerable interest in forming a ski

¹C.E. Mortureux, "The Sage of the Ottawa Ski Club", Ottawa Ski Club Handbook, 1942, p. 5.

²D. Batchelor, "Skiing in Canada", Canadian Geographical Journal, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1937, p. 63.

³Ibid.

club was demonstrated. Among the leaders of this club movement were "both the Lockeberg and Kihl brothers".⁴

The Ottawa Ski Club, 1910

The Ottawa Ski Club "was born in the Y.M.C.A. in 1910", according to C. E. Mortureux. "As in most parts of Canada", he suggests, "its godfathers were ski jumpers",⁵ though in the Ottawa area there appears to have been no shortage of members of the other ski disciplines of touring and cross country skiing. What was considered the Ottawa Ski Club's inaugural meeting was called by Frank Bedard and Joe Morin. Only a small group attended, and they were reported to be "enthusiastic in their outlook",⁶ especially with regard to ski jumping. For several years, most of the ski jumping in Ottawa had taken place on a small jump, considered more of a suicide hill, located in Rockcliffe Park.⁷ At the meeting, Sigurd Lockeberg, a dedicated ski jumping pioneer, was elected the club's first president. He was assisted during the initial year by Vice President, Frank Bedard and Joe Morin, in the office of secretary-treasurer.⁸ The young club was reorganized along more functional lines as the presidency

⁴Ibid.

⁵Mortureux, op. cit., p. 2.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Herbert Marshall, "Historical Outline of the Ottawa Ski Club", Ottawa Ski Club Bulletin, November 11, 1965, p. 6.

⁸Batchelor, op. cit., p. 63.

passed to Mr. J. A. D. Holbrook in 1911. A number of prominent citizens, including G. W. Ross, Ormand Haycock, Alex Haultain and Jack Ryan⁹ were appointed as the club's first Board of Directors.

Ski Jumping in Rockcliffe Park 1910

Ski jumping after 1910 rapidly gained status as a competitive sport throughout eastern Canada. The Ottawa area was no exception, as informal jumping competitions were frequently held on small snow jumps built in the park. The future of the sport in the city appeared to be somewhat assured, since the ski jumpers had been influential in supporting the idea of a ski club. They expressed the need for a strong club organization on which to base and direct future competitive activity. Without the collective support of the recreational skiers, who regularly used Rockcliffe Park, the ski jumpers found it difficult to deal on equal terms with the Ottawa Improvement Commission. The Commission had threatened to have all the ski jumps and jumpers banned from the park, and this problem was one of the many topics outlined and discussed at the club's first meeting. As a result, the young club took action towards the possibility of acquiring a permanent jump tower and suitable landing hill in the Park.¹⁰

The Ottawa Improvement Control Commission, a civic

⁹Mortureux, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁰Marshall, op. cit., p. 6.

body in the city, was from time to time, considered to have been the major stumbling block in the path of the ambitious ski jumpers. Several problems had developed over the years between the jumpers and certain members of the commission. It had been the Commission's task to supervise the development and improvement of city park land for recreational use by the public. It was their contention that a ski jump, as was being proposed, would add little to the aesthetic beauty of the park, and few citizens would benefit from its use. A statement by Mortureux perhaps accounts for some of the misunderstanding, as "the commission was composed primarily of old snowshoers" and, therefore, "held rather vague and strange ideas about the embellishment of the capitol by an unsightly ski jump tower".¹¹

Having already found a hill to their liking, the jumpers suggested it be stripped of trees and suitably prepared for the next season of ski jumping. Unfortunately, the commission failed to view this proposal as a park improvement, as they preferred the trees. Needless to say, "the fight was on".¹² In order to overcome some of the commission's unsympathetic views, Marshall relates that "in the dead of night a group of jumpers secretly removed some trees interfering with the location of the projected tower and landing

¹¹Mortureux, op. cit., p. 3.

¹²Ibid.

hill". Joe Morin was reported to have skilfully "directed the operation", with suitable technical assistance coming from, "Hans Kihl and Hans and Sigurd Lockeberg".¹³ A rather small and inconspicuous jumping tower soon appeared on the scene, though it was appropriately hidden from view by some large pine trees. And so Rockcliffe became the site of Ottawa's first official ski jump, much to the embarrassment of the City's Control Commission. Marshall writes that "rather than prolong the issue", members of the Commission decided to adopt a policy of "wait and see".¹⁴ It was rumoured that the superintendent of the Commission had been promised a season pass to all future ski meets if he would ignore the evening and weekend activity around the jump site. Their decision to allow the tower to remain was based on a belief "that the craze of ski jumping, if left unhindered, would soon die out".¹⁵ To the dismay of the city authority, this did not occur, as each evening brought forth new jumping enthusiasts and additions to the tower, which, by 1914 had risen "to an imposing height of 145 feet".¹⁶

Mortureux and Trail Skiing, 1913

C. E. Mortgageux, one of Canada's great ski pioneers in

¹³Herbert Marshall, "Ski jumping in the Ottawa Ski Club", Ottawa Ski Club Bulletin, No. 2, February 1967, p. 8

¹⁴Marshall, op. cit., p. 6.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

the Ottawa area, had been an active and enthusiastic advocate of ski touring since 1906.¹⁷ However, he did not become active in organized skiing until 1913, when, as a representative of the "cake-eaters, he joined the young Ottawa Ski Club".¹⁸ This term was used in the club to affectionately distinguish those members who did not actively participate in the sport of ski jumping. Mortureux's interests in skiing centred mainly on the recreational aspects, and his initial efforts to encourage ski touring and trail skiing in the club met with resistance from the jumping fraternity. The Ottawa Club, for the most part, was at this time, pre-occupied with the sport of ski jumping, and most of the activities were focused on the ski jump. Mortureux was apparently granted some concessions, since it was recalled "that he was allowed to arrange for little ski trips",¹⁹ provided these trips started and finished at the Rockcliffe Jump Tower.

It was primarily through his determination and leadership that the Ottawa Ski Club began to plan and clear a network of cross country trails, and to the delight of the jumpers, most of them began and ended at the Rockcliffe tower. Mortureux was a name that became synonymous with skiing in Ottawa, and it seems appropriate to attribute to him the honour of having initiated the club's first program of trail development..

¹⁷Marshall, op. cit.

¹⁸Mortureux, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁹Ibid.

Ski Jumping 1915

The period 1910 to 1915 was considered to be "a hey-day for the jumpers",²⁰ as the only form of competition sponsored by the club in these years was ski jumping tournaments. These proved to be highly successful ventures, and Marshall recalls that "to the Ottawans of the period it was a thrilling novelty".²¹ On weekends, special streetcars would transport large crowds of inquisitive spectators to watch the daredevil jumpers perform. On days when special competitions were held, the jump hill would be lined with spectators, which on occasions were estimated at over five thousand.²² These early jumping meets brought forth many local skiers, who in negotiating the Rockcliffe ski slide, subsequently assumed an active role in other aspects of club activity and promoting its jumping meets. The troubled times that preceded the first Great War adversely affected all forms of competitive sports in the Capitol, and skiing was no exception. As a result, after 1915 ski jumping interest declined rapidly, and during the war years was almost non-existent. Interest in trail skiing, however, was maintained through the efforts of small local interest groups.

²⁰Marshall, op. cit., p. 8.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

Skiing Extends to the Gatineau Hills, 1916

Cross country interest grew during the war, nurtured perhaps by the absence of competition from ski jumping. The club, operating on a wartime budget, sponsored informal ski trips, hikes, and in some cases, small scale ski expeditions. According to the club historian, groups of skiers, during this period, roamed far and wide throughout the Gatineau Hills.²³ These pioneer ski tourers were to establish the basis and lay the foundation for the present-day network of ski trails that are such an important part of the Ottawa Ski Club's program. In exploring the vast Gatineau area on touring skis, Ottawa skiers were unknowingly setting a pattern that would significantly influence the future development of skiing in Canada. The extended war years had dealt a severe blow to organized club skiing and, by the end of the war, the Ottawa Ski Club had ceased to exist.

The Ottawa Ski Club, Incorporated 1919

After the war, interest in skiing slowly began to rise and its early revival was assured when, in the fall of 1919, several of the charter members began to talk of reactivating the old ski club. "In March of that year", writes Marshall, "C. E. Mortureux and George Audette were instrumental in

²³Herbert Marshall, "Historical Outline of the Ottawa Ski Club", Ottawa Ski Club Bulletin, No. 4, November 1965, p. 6.

reviving the Ottawa Ski Club."²⁴ The club, reorganized as the Ottawa Ski Club Incorporated, elected C. E. Mortureux as its first president. He held the president's chair for an unprecedented period of twenty-seven years, and was considered by many to have been the father of skiing in the Gatineau Hills.²⁵ Under his expert leadership, the club grew from a modest membership of nineteen in the year of its revival to 2,177 in 1927.²⁶ The financial basis on which the new club began its operation was meagre for, as Mortureux recalls, "the assets of the new club were composed of a sum of nineteen dollars".²⁷ As a reminder of earlier days, the club was confronted with an outstanding bill of twelve hundred dollars, the unpaid balance on the old jump tower. The creditors, though, were sympathetic, and in the interests of the sport reduced the bill to five hundred dollars, which the club paid in 1922.

The new club adopted what was referred to as a "sane and conservative programme",²⁸ consisting of pleasure skiing, long distance outings and cross country racing. The program

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Herbert Marshall, History of the Ottawa Ski Club", Ottawa Ski Club Bulletin, No. 1, January 1967, p. 16.

²⁶_____, "Ottawa Ski Club Report", Canadian Ski Annual (Montreal: 1927), p. 34.

²⁷Mortureux, op. cit., p. 3.

²⁸Ibid., p. 5.

committee of the club refused to be "tied to the foot of a jump tower of any kind".²⁹ However, the return of Captain Joe Morin, and his subsequent appointment to the Board of Directors as Chairman of ski jumping, was perhaps coincident with a return of the club's jumping spirit. Soon another tower appeared in Rockcliffe Park, in spite of protests from the Control Commission, who still contended that ski jumpers had no legal access to the park. On one occasion the dispute reached the point of war, as the commission apparently knocked the existing tower down and confiscated the lumber.³⁰ The city finally intervened and leased that section of the park to the ski club, removing it from the jurisdiction of the Control Commission. A condition in the agreement specified that the club was to share the facility with a newly formed club, the Cliffside Ski Club. This somewhat awkward condition saw both clubs having equal rights with respect to the ski jump. According to Mortureux, "this division of responsibility had rather unfortunate results", as from that time on, interest in the Rockcliffe jump appeared to wane, "in spite of the valiant efforts of Sigurd Lockeberg and Roger Vincent".³¹

Cliffside Ski Club 1919

The Cliffside Ski Club was founded in November of 1919,

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

with Ted Devlin elected as its first president.³² Throughout the following years the existence of a rival ski club resulted in friendly inter-club competitive and social activity in the Ottawa area. Ski competitions improved, as well as many other aspects of skiing due to the enthusiastic rivalry between "the Cliffside", as they were affectionately called, "and the Ottawa Ski Club".³³ Together they made many contributions to the growth and betterment of Canadian skiing. The Cliffside Ski Club made their headquarters at Fairy Lake, and it was Gunnar Schjelderup who was given credit for locating the steep incline south of that site which soon became suitably prepared for ski jumping. It was here, on what proved to be a perfectly contoured landing hill, that "the Cliffside erected their first ski tower in 1922".³⁴

Ladies' Skiing in Ottawa 1919

Before 1920, many of the leading officials promoting trail skiing programs in both the Ottawa and the Cliffside Ski Clubs were ladies. It had been remarked about two of those "attractive notables", namely Miss Marjory Dillon and a Mrs. Dixon, "that few men in the Gatineau could keep up with them".³⁵

³²D. Batchelor, "Canadian Skiing", Canadian Geographical Journal, Vol. 14, No. 2, February 1937, p. 65.

³³Marshall, op. cit., p. 17.

³⁴D. Batchelor, "The Cliffside Ski Club", Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1930), p. 35.

³⁵The Montreal Gazette, February 14, 1944, p. 6.

At a cross country race at Shawbridge, Quebec, in 1919, a pair of lady skiers apparently outskied Percy Douglas and Howard Bird over a tough and hilly eight mile course. "They were waiting for us when we finished, as fresh as when they started",³⁶ it was painfully recalled by the two male skiers.

The Trail Skiing Era 1920

Skiing interest by now had spread to other areas near the city. The Gatineau Hills soon became the most popular area for cross country and recreational skiers, as well as those pursuing the new sport of hill skiing. The ski jumpers performed at the new jump, built near Fairy Lake by the Cliffside Ski Club. Here it was argued they could hold paying competitions on Sunday, a practice not permitted in Rockcliffe Park. The skiing population continued to grow and with this growth the ski trails soon extended well into the hinterland surrounding the nation's capitol. It was estimated that by 1920, ski trails existed from Wrightville to as far west as the McCloskey clearing.³⁷ With the development of such a vast system of trails, it soon became necessary to establish several rest areas. The problem had been partially solved, as many local farmers and innkeepers had made their homes and establishments available to skiers on weekends. Of these, "William

³⁶H.P. Douglas, My Skiing Years (Montreal: Whitcombe and Gilman Ltd., 1951), p. 68.

³⁷Marshall, op. cit., p. 6.

Murphies, at Kingsmere, was famous, while at Ironside, Mrs. Desjardin's was a favorite rendezvous for those using Dome Hill".³⁸

The first Camp Fortune ski lodge and ski hill was purchased and opened in 1920, though it was more suitably referred to as "Mort's Shack", and was located on top of what became known as "Mort's Hill".³⁹ It had originally been a woodcutter's cabin owned by a Mr. Fortin, from which nearby Fortin Lake received its name. This also appears to have been the source for the name "Camp Fortune", as somehow, perhaps due to a mispronunciation, the name Fortin was changed to Fortune and, as Mortureux suggests, "it having a pleasant sound", was adopted as being quite appropriate, and "the spot came to be known as Camp Fortune".⁴⁰ Fortune Lodge or Mort's Shack, according to its namesake, was fully equipped with "a stove, table and crude benches".⁴¹ The feminine touch, including tapestries and cushions was soon added to the cabin by lady members of the club. These notables were headed by Mrs. Liuder Pratte. The first official weekend saw the attendance limited to a dozen invited guests. However, the following weekend, seventy-five cold and hungry skiers appeared, and at once the clamour for "bigger shacks and more of them"⁴²

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Mortureux, op. cit., p. 5.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

ushered in the era of lodge building and trail improvement for the Ottawa Ski Club.

The Cliffside Expand 1923

The first Keogans Lodge was erected by the Cliffside Club in 1923, and it soon became one of the favourite meeting places in the area. It was demolished and rebuilt in 1930 to enable the club to accommodate the increase in membership.⁴³ By 1924, the Cliffside Club recorded a membership of over four hundred, and that year was considered one of the most successful in their history. Some of the existing ski trails were improved and others were extended to connect Keogan's Lodge to Kingsmere. The first Interscholastic ski events for boys and girls were sponsored, and they had been well represented in inter-club competitions, as well as in most of the major competitive ski events. Outstanding performances had been registered that year by Gerald Dupuis, and Orville and Len Moore while, in the ladies' competitions, it was Margo MacDonald, Mrs. Ernie Brockington and Jean Marie Russell, who were frequent winners. That year witnessed the appearance of a club newspaper, "the Ski-o-Gram"⁴⁴, which was published and distributed by the Cliffside Club to its members. In 1934, the first downhill ski run was opened and it proved to be

⁴³ _____, "The Cliffside Ski Club", Canadian Ski Annual, 1930, p. 35.

⁴⁴ _____, "The Cliffside Ski Club", Canadian Ski Annual, 1925, p. 37.

popular.⁴⁵

Ottawa Skiing, A Way of Life - 1925

By 1922, several cabins had been erected around Pink's Lake and at Dome Hill. During the summer of 1925, a cabin had been built on the east side of the Gatineau River, opposite Tenaga. It apparently never did become too popular, and according to Marshall, "the cabin was rebuilt as Western Lodge in 1930".⁴⁶

To most of the citizens of Ottawa at this time, Saturday afternoons were half holidays. On these days, during the winter, skiers could be seen boarding the city street cars, that would take them as far out as Wrightville. From here they would begin a three-mile cross country jaunt to Dome Hill, which was a challenging ski slope, 275 feet high. Such a trip involved crossing open fields, going through wire fences and thick bush, and is described in detail by Miss Vivian Reid (now Mrs. Leigh Bishop), in the Ottawa Ski Club News of January 21, 1925.⁴⁷

The first lodge in the area was opened in 1922, at the foot of Dome Hill, and this soon became noted as one of the more popular. This popularity developed and grew, despite

⁴⁵_____, "The Cliffside Ski Club", Canadian Ski Annual, 1936, p. 130.

⁴⁶Herbert Marshall, "Historical Outline of the Ottawa Ski Club", Ottawa Ski Club Bulletin, No. 1, January 1967, p. 16.

⁴⁷The Ottawa Ski Club News, January 21, 1925, p. 4.

the lack of modern conveniences, such as lights, ski tows, or indoor plumbing. The lodge itself was enlarged three times prior to 1930 in order to accommodate the weekend crowds. The lodge cafeteria was supervised by Alex Haultain, who was assisted by a large number of volunteer workers. The operation was a financial success, in spite of the limited menu, which consisted mainly of beans, doughnuts, and tea. One report suggests that "over 570 patrons were served in Feb. 1924."⁴⁸ Ski instruction became available to people of Ottawa in 1926, when Bratislar Pliske, Alf Barnes and Fred Browne conducted adult ski classes on Saturday afternoons.⁴⁹ The Dome Hill Junior program also began in 1926 when, under the supervision of Mrs. R. G. Semple and a group of volunteers, ranging in age from six to sixteen were given afternoon ski instruction each week.⁵⁰

During the winter, Sundays were considered to be ski days, as it was the only full-day holiday during the week. For at least a decade after the club re-organized in 1919, skiers would jam the city street cars with ski equipment and journey to Union Station. Here they would board ski trains to the Gatineau Hills, a trip that was considered part of the

⁴⁸Herbert Marshall, "Historical Outline of the Ottawa Ski Club", Ottawa Ski Club Bulletin, No. 1, January 1966, p. 13.

⁴⁹_____, "Ottawa Ski Club Report", Canadian Ski Annual, 1926-1927, p. 34.

⁵⁰_____, "Ottawa Ski Club Report", Canadian Ski Annual, 1928-1929, p. 34.

day's enjoyment. Such days were considered social as well as sporting occasions, "and there was much passing to and fro between the coaches to exchange greetings". It was recalled "that one usually found Fred, (Trapper), Brown's band of flute and mouth organ players performing, to the delight of the assembled crowd".⁵¹ Some skiers left the train at Tenaga or Kirk's ferry for a shorter trip to Camp Fortune, while others continued on to the Cascades. Here skiers crossed open farm country, which led to winding wooded trails, which ended at Meach Lake. A common destination for many others was the McCloskey farm, which became a favourite place for Sunday lunch. On one such trip, Marshall wrote, "after lunch we would ski by the Ridge Road, while others took in the Cliff-sides' Sunset Trail to Kingsmere, Park Lake and Wrightville, where they took the street car to Ottawa."⁵²

By 1925, a regular bus service to most of the ski areas became a reality, and this ended the era of long distance ski trips that were "enjoyed by so many".⁵³ Improved transportation to the areas also ushered in "a hectic period of trail making".⁵⁴ The trail-maker extraordinary was Captain Joe Morin, who along with his night rider's group, in seven

⁵¹Herbert Marshall, "Historical Outline of the Ottawa Ski Club", Ottawa Ski Club Bulletin, March 1966, p. 5.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Marshall, op. cit., p. 13.

years opened up a new and extensive trail system, "with Camp Fortune as the hub".⁵⁵ These new trails made the ski areas accessible to more skiers, as there was no road for cars, and one still had to ski into Camp Fortune. Morin's network of trails also offered the skier a variety of choices in terrain. One could select either "the thrill-packed route",⁵⁶ following trails such as "Penguin, Canyon, Little Switzerland, Merry-go-round, Western or Highland," or the long distance bush trails, popular among the novice tourers.

With the trail system complete, Marshall relates, "the winds of change again began to affect the skiing fraternity".⁵⁷ Downhill and slalom fever, which began in Europe in the early 1920's, had spread to Canada. The discovery, clearing and opening of the great slalom hill in 1932 was considered to have been the crowning achievement of Joe Morin. Trail skiing continued to attract large numbers, but new skiers were interested in pursuing this modern version of an old sport. The latest and most dramatic innovation arrived at Camp Fortune in 1940, when the first ski tow was installed. The popularity of hill skiing was to grow rapidly, relegating ski touring to somewhat a minor role in the program of the Ottawa Ski Club.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Mortureux, op. cit., p. 3.

II SKIING IN THE TORONTO AREA

The Toronto Ski Club, 1908

Very little skiing was done in the Toronto area prior to the formation of the Toronto Ski Club in 1908. It began operations that year with a modest nucleus of eight members, none of whom, it was said, "had proper ski equipment."⁵⁹ Few skiers in the Toronto area had, up to that time, enjoyed the benefits of adequate ski equipment. However, it was not long until the sport had attracted a modest following and by 1910 membership in the club had risen to just over forty-four.⁶⁰ Almost everyone, by this time, had acquired adequate skis, boots and bindings. Drummond reported, in 1912, that "the sport had now become very popular among Torontonians".⁶¹ The popularity of skiing had grown to such an extent that in the 1910-11 season, a ski jump was built and a hill record of fifty-eight feet established.⁶²

Ski Experiences 1912

Besides competitive ski jumping, ski activity in the club consisted of impromptu ski trips, and organized tours through the nearby countryside. Weekend excursions to the

⁵⁹The Ski Runner, Toronto Ski Club Bulletin, February 1967, p. 5.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹The Ski Runner, Toronto Ski Club Bulletin 1912, p. 6.

⁶²The Ski Runner, Toronto Ski Club Bulletin, February 1967, p. 5.

Caledon Hills proved to be a popular activity, and a club spokesman reported that several of these were held with "as many as thirty skiers participating".⁶³

The club's first secretary, Mr. George Varty, describes one of the more memorable holiday excursions, on which he was accompanied by three of his club mates, "Messrs. Walker, Pack and Archer".

On our holiday we chartered a horse and sleigh and started up Yonge Street for a favourable locality about four miles out of town, where we arrived about 10:30 a.m. We had a splendid day's sport, sliding down the numerous hills and wandering about the many picturesque spots to be found there. We even indulged in jumping from impromptu banks, made by throwing the snow together and quite creditable distances were made.⁶⁴

Telemark Ski Club 1922

The sport really became established with the formation of the Telemark Ski Club in 1922. A number of ski enthusiasts gathered at a local Y.M.C.A. to plan a ski program that would be centred on the gentle hills of High Park. According to Douglas, the original club notice read, "every member is expected to have a complete ski outfit, skis, harness and ski staff".⁶⁵ The young club prospered and grew rapidly during the next two years. Soon the facilities at High Park became inadequate and the young club found that expansion was necessary if the sport were to continue its growth.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵The Montreal Gazette, February 14, 1944, p. 6.

H. T. Sam Cliff and The Toronto Ski Club

In 1924 the dynamic and resourceful Sam Cliff assumed the Presidency, and under his leadership, skiing in the Toronto area began to shift its attention to the north. The name of the club was changed to the Toronto Ski Club and this was the beginning of great years for skiing in Ontario. The President was ably assisted by men such as Charlie Durand, Al Wilson and Al Chilcott. Soon after, the names of Alex Snively, Merritt Putman, Fred Hall and Ross Larway would be added to the honour roll as the builders of skiing in Ontario and in Canada.

During the nineteen-twenty period, the Toronto Ski Club found itself confined to these ski areas near the city. This terrain limited to some extent the skiing available to the members. As a result of this, the club became more interested in the technical aspects of skiing, and pioneered the area of ski proficiency tests in Canada. This interest was somewhat coincident with the advent of hill skiing and slalom racing, which were both strongly supported by skiers in the Toronto area. "The Toronto Ski Club always engaged the best instructors", recalls Douglas, writing in The Montreal Gazette about these early days. When hill skiing was just beginning to become popular, he further points out, "they worked and practiced until many of the nation's best slalom racers came from Toronto".⁶⁶

⁶⁶The Montreal Gazette, February 11, 1944, p. 7.

Ski Proficiency Tests 1924

Over the years, interest had developed in the ski proficiency tests that were being used by the Ski Club of Great Britain. In response to a demand for similar tests adapted to Canadian topography, the Toronto Ski Club instituted their own ski test in 1924.⁶⁷ These tests were specifically designed for Canadian ski terrain and called for ski manoeuvres, which were somewhat more detailed than those of the British. As with other similar ski tests, the advantage seemed to be that the beginning skier could, with the aid of proper progressions, plan a more systematic course of practice. In a sense, these early ski tests were developed in response to the increased public interest in learning to ski. Among the first test badges to be awarded were those to, "H. T. Cliff, M. G. Putman, A. L. Wilson, and J. A. MacKenzie".⁶⁸

Ski Activity 1925

In 1925, the club began to outgrow the congested areas surrounding High Park and the Humber Valley. Many began to extend their weekend expeditions to the nearby suburban areas of the city. In a second development that year, the club endorsed a policy, encouraging slalom racing, which was, to Canada, a new form of ski competition. "This branch of racing",

⁶⁷_____, "Toronto Ski Club Report", Canadian Ski Annual, 1924-1925, p. 18.

⁶⁸Ibid.

the club went on record to say, "encourages and fosters that racing spirit which comes to only those fortunates, who have been blessed with the reckless daring."⁶⁹

A Junior School Boys' Race was held in 1926, sponsored by the Sports Chairman of the Toronto Ski Club, for the students of St. Andrew's College.⁷⁰ Club ski tests, in 1927, had been superceded by nationally sponsored tests of the C.A.S.A., since they had been impressed by the favourable results obtained by the Toronto Ski Club. The C.A.S.A. Technical Board had been advised and given authority to produce a similar set for adoption by the National Ski Association in 1927.

Club Expansion 1929

The club moved its headquarters to the Summit Golf Club headquarters in 1929, where the real expansion of Toronto skiing began. The skiing season alone was now extended from late November to late March. At an elevation of 1,045 feet, and located only twenty miles from the centre of the city, this site offered unlimited opportunity for future skiing. When a clubhouse was acquired at the site, an initial membership list of two hundred had, by the end of the year, risen to

⁶⁹"Toronto Ski Club Report", Canadian Ski Annual, 1925-1926, p. 31.

⁷⁰"Toronto Ski Club Report", Canadian Ski Annual, 1926-1927, p. 29.

just over four hundred.⁷¹ The trail committee, headed by Fred Hall, began developing a network of excellent trails, which, according to one source, "has done more for the members to improve their general skiing proficiency than any other activity undertaken".⁷² One observer recalled that "on the velvet smooth fairways, one could ski on but a few inches of snow".⁷³ This feature, combined with the variety of wooded trails and hills, gave Toronto residents one of the most unique ski areas in Canada. This was also the year that they began recording club events on film and producing several ski instructional movies. These were used for teaching and promoting skiing in the province and in the Toronto School System. Alex McLaren headed the cross country committee and M. G. Putman, the jumpers. In 1929 a Veterans' Ski Society was founded and an appropriate identification badge was provided those who qualified.

The Toronto Ski Club Program Extended in 1930

Membership more than doubled during the 1929-1930 ski season and had reached the grand total of nine hundred and fifty. Much of the credit for this was again directed to the work done by the trails committee. Many miles of wood-sheltered, scenic ski trails had been developed, marked, and

⁷¹_____, "Toronto Ski Club Report", Canadian Ski Annual, 1928-1929, p. 33.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Douglas, op. cit., p. 81.

mapped since the club moved to the Summit site. If any one club interest could be cited as being significant to the development of Canadian skiing, it would have to be "the interest in the art of skiing",⁷⁴ which resulted from their efforts to pass the proficiency ski tests. The technical improvement among those skiers who had made the effort to pursue the tests was, according to one candidate, "worth what it had cost in sacrifices, time, and pleasure".⁷⁵

The following years saw the membership list increased again to 1,502 by 1932. Club fees were advertised as \$3.25 for seniors, and \$1.25 for juniors. Ski tests continued to attract candidates, and the club's publication, *The Ski Runner*, had expanded its circulation to 20,000 copies.⁷⁶

Ski Jumping in Toronto 1933

Ski jumping was encouraged in the club through the adoption of three classes of jumping tests and by the production of an instructional movie. The 1933 season culminated several years of poor snow conditions and the membership dropped to 1,100.⁷⁷ These dry years encouraged the more adventuresome skiers in Toronto to discover new ski country and to meet

⁷⁴ _____, "Toronto Ski Club Report", Canadian Ski Annual, 1929-1930, p. 26.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

⁷⁶ _____, "Toronto Ski Club Report", Canadian Ski Annual, 1932, p. 39.

⁷⁷ _____, "Club Reports", Canadian Ski Annual, 1933, p. 73.

skiers in other parts of the province. Such interaction resulted in the organization of many new ski clubs and provided a sound basis for the later development of the Ontario Ski Zone.

The Thorncliffe ski jump had been slated for modification in the fall of 1933 to bring it up to current F.I.S. standards. However, unreasonable weather had restricted reconstruction and it did not begin until just twenty-eight days prior to the club's annual ski championship, scheduled for February 3, 1934. Unreasonably warm weather had removed all traces of snow and the club was faced with what was becoming a difficult and recurring problem. As usual, it was expected that it would be solved by resorting to the expensive habit of importing snow to the ski slope by truck and rail. In view of the proposed cost of this venture, Ross Workman of the University of Toronto, suggested another alternative, that of "using shaved ice from the outdoor skating rinks".⁷⁸ By the morning of the meet, over seventy-five tons of shaved ice had been liberally spread over the ski hill, which enabled the club to run off its championship and give the local ski jumpers some much-needed practice before the impending Ontario Championships.⁷⁹ Merritt Putman, of the Toronto Ski Club, and a member of the 1928 Olympic Team, won that club event with

⁷⁸_____, "Club Reports", Canadian Ski Annual, 1934, p. 80.

⁷⁹Ibid.

jumps of 100 and 113 feet, followed closely by C. Skauaas, who won the longest standing jump event with a 126 foot effort.

A Major Ski Event 1934

The long-awaited ambition of the Toronto Ski Club, that of hosting a major ski tournament, took place as the first official Ontario Ski Championships were held on February 10, and 11, 1934. The new ski jump was officially opened on Saturday at a ceremony presided over by the Hon. Wilfred Heighington, M.P. for St. David. He made a short speech on the development of skiing in Ontario, then cut the ribbon, which sent "A. Almon, of the Montreal Ski Club" down the inrun. The competition was enjoyed by an estimated crowd of approximately 10,000.⁸⁰ The major Provincial awards in skiing that year went to Jack Landry of the Ottawa Ski Club, as he outclassed the entire field by nine full points, and also won the longest standing jump with a leap of 128 feet. The next day the provincial cross country events were held at nearby Caledon, over a 12.8 mile course. This event was won by Halvor Heggteit of Ottawa with a time of 1 hour, 27 minutes, 50 seconds, though he was followed closely in second place by Harry Pangman of the Red Birds Ski Club of Montreal.

⁸⁰, "The Toronto Ski Club", Canadian Ski Yearbook, 1934, p. 20.

H. T. Cliff Resigns 1934

The Toronto Ski Club suffered a major disappointment when "at the close of the 1934 season President H. T. Sam Cliff announced his resignation".⁸¹ As the chief executive of the club for ten years, he had guided it through some difficult times to its present position, as one of the country's leading ski clubs. However, future success seemed assured, with the election of Fred A. Hall to the president's chair at their annual meeting in May. Sam Cliff was also honoured by H. P. Douglas, who wrote of him, saying, "He was an accomplished skier, having gained his experience and training in Europe."⁸² He had also been awarded the coveted Gold K of the Kandahar Ski Club of Murren, as well as an honorary membership in the Ski Club of Great Britain. In England, these, at the time, were considered two of the highest honours one could receive in skiing.⁸²

Cliff had been the driving force behind organized skiing in Toronto and during the latter years had gathered into the club a goodly number of hard-working executives. These men were not only concerned with the immediate area surrounding Toronto, but encouraged the development of ski clubs and ski hills throughout the province of Ontario. It was through the leadership of Sam Cliff that many Ontario centres became ski minded. He, along with his assistants, travelled throughout the province with motion pictures, lectures and demonstrations

⁸²The Montreal Gazette, February 14, 1944, p. 7.

to publicize and popularize the sport, in an effort to get new clubs formed. It is interesting to note that, in 1933 when the Toronto Club began expanding its interest to other countries, there were only three Ontario ski clubs affiliated with the C.A.S.A. Two of these clubs were from Ottawa, which soon would become part of the Gatineau Ski Zone. However, by 1940, the total number of clubs in the Ontario Ski Zone alone, had increased to thirty-six, scattered throughout the province.⁸³

Toronto Skiers Look To The North 1935

The habit of travelling north on weekends to ski had become a general practice among Toronto skiers by 1935. Good skiing could be found at areas developed near Flesherton, Caledon, Orangeville, Melville, Acton, and in the Beaver Valley. Train service was improved and included weekend excursions and it was hoped that soon a one-day trip on Sunday would be possible. The major event of the 1935 season was the International Exhibition Tournament, held in Toronto on January 26 and 27. The club was reported to have been "delighted to have among the competing athletes, Dick Durrance and Link Washburn, of Dartmouth, and Carl Fahrner and John Paish, of Buffalo".⁸⁴ Again, due to a lack of natural snow,

⁸³ _____, "Club Reports", Canadian Ski Yearbook, 1940, p. 12.

⁸⁴ _____, "Club Reports", Canadian Ski Yearbook, 1934/1935, p. 121.

"the jumping hill had to be covered with 150 tons of shaved ice".⁸⁵ In spite of bitterly cold weather, a crowds of over six thousand turned out to witness the jumping events on Saturday afternoon. Cross country and downhill races were again held on Sunday at Caledon before about one thousand spectators. The outstanding performances by the competitors created many new admirers among local ski fans, especially in the downhill events.

Among the honoured guests, who attended that meet, were C.A.S.A. President, W. B. Thompson, who, along with H. P. Douglas and Sigurd Lockeberg, were considered to be "the big three" of organized skiing in Canada.⁸⁶ They attended the meet, representing the interests of the national ski authority and left greatly impressed by the organizational capability of the local club. Partially, as a result of their support, the Toronto Ski Club was honoured in being entrusted with the Dominion Championships for 1936.⁸⁷

Skiing in Ontario continued to grow in popularity, and in Toronto this was adequately reflected in club membership, which rose from 1,500 in 1935 to over 2,000 by the end of the 1936 season. Ski and snow conditions improved throughout the following winters, and one was able to ski extensively in the

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

heart of the city. This, along with the fact that skiing remained a comparatively inexpensive sport compared to other recreational pursuits, contributed to its continued growth. The Toronto Club proclaimed "that skiing was fast becoming a popular sport for the whole family".⁸⁸

Club facilities, by 1936, were crowded to capacity. It was only due to a well-organized club safety campaign that accidents were limited to an isolated few. Doctors in the club had been identified by a red cross insignia in 1936, and were thus the first element of a ski patrol in Ontario ski centres. Ski instruction in the club began a year earlier on a small scale, though in 1936 it was enlarged upon considerably, as suitable instructional material had been obtained from Europe. The C.P.R. inaugurated its first "snow train to Caledon, Orangeville, Flesherton and Owen Sound" in 1936, an occurrence that greatly helped alleviate the overcrowding of local ski hills.⁸⁹

A Ski Club Professional 1937

In 1937, the club brought over Fritz Loosli, an accredited ski instructor from Switzerland, to direct the instructional program for the club. He introduced dry-land ski courses, which proved to be very successful, and it was reported to have been of considerable benefit to club skiers

⁸⁸_____, "Club Reports", Canadian Ski Yearbook, 1936, p. 120.

⁸⁹Ibid.

who took part.⁹⁰ Membership in the Toronto Club continued to grow and by 1938 passed the 3,100 mark.⁹¹ The club, encouraged by events of the past year, installed their newly-acquired instructor as the club's professional coach. He was provided a residence at the Summit Ski Hill in what became known as "the Half Way House".⁹² It soon became the most popular spot at the hill and, in essence, was regarded as the third and most exclusive ski lodge.

The Largest Ski Club in Canada 1940

A new ski area was opened at the Dagmar Ski site and with the cooperation of the railways, ski trains were soon organized. The popularity of this project resulted in its being extended as a regular weekend feature. By 1940, the Toronto Ski Club had become the largest ski club in the C.A.S.A.,⁹³ as their club programme had been expanded to include aspects of all skiing disciplines. Toronto skiers had been instrumental in developing the C.A.S.A. National Ski Tests and in practicing and promoting ski instruction and ski safety. Their greatest contribution, though, could be considered to be the role they played in the formation and development of Ontario skiing

⁹⁰_____, "Toronto Ski Club", Canadian Ski Yearbook, 1937, p. 134.

⁹¹_____, "Toronto Ski Club Report", Canadian Ski Yearbook, 1938, p. 158.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³The Montreal Gazette, February 11, 1944, p. 6.

through the work of the Ontario Ski Zone Committee. The ski institutions in Ontario did not only promote skiing in their own province, but extended their influence over the years throughout the entire nation.

CHAPTER VII

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKIING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA 1900-1940

I ROSSLAND - TRAIL

A Canadian Ski Champion 1900

The first ski club in Rossland was believed to have been formed shortly after 1890. It apparently lasted until around 1907, when interest in skiing seemed to disappear.¹ Winter carnivals were popular throughout this period, and they had, by 1900, become one of the major sporting events of the winter season. In almost every instance, competitive ski events were listed on the program and ski jumping was usually the big spectator attraction. As part of its annual winter carnival in 1900, Rossland held what was officially titled "The Dominion Ski Championship". Club records at that time indicate that Olaus Jeldness "won both the ski running and ski jumping events,"² and captured the MacIntosh Trophy for the third successive year. "Governor MacIntosh", it was said, "was on hand to present the cup to Jeldness,"³ proclaiming him at that time, "the first Ski Champion of Canada".⁴

¹Personal Correspondence, Mr. J. D. MacDonald, Rossland Historical Association, August, 1967.

²Ibid.

³Excerpts from a letter written by Olaus Jeldness on July 3, 1932, Personal Papers, Mrs. A. J. Hersloff, Spokane, Washington.

⁴L. H. Whittaker, Rossland, The Golden City (Rossland, Rossland Review Ltd., 1949), p. 20.

Douglas Lawlor, Ski Champion 1902

It was in 1902 that rather peculiar circumstances resulted in an eight year old boy winning the carnival's senior ski racing championship. Douglas Lawlor, the youngest member in a family of skiers, had expressed an interest in the junior ski race. However, he was not allowed to take part in the race since the other contestants were much older. The young boy, due to his persistence, was finally allowed to take part in the senior event, as club officials expressed the view "that he would soon be left far behind, and likely drop out soon after the start".⁵ During the course of the race, most of the highly regarded senior competitors were eliminated through an unfortunate series of accidents. At the half-way mark, it was reported that "Joe Lawlor was in the lead with little Douglas hard on his heels".⁶ Shortly after this juncture, the elder Lawlor suffered the misfortune of breaking his harness, which forced him out of the competition. Urged on by his brothers and spectators along the route, Douglas Lawlor "came down Columbia Avenue" reportedly well ahead of the remaining field, and staggered across the finish line, "to become the winner of the Senior Ski Race".⁷ That year will be

⁵R. Goodchild, "Rossland Skiing History, is Punctuated with Hilarity", The Vancouver Sun, January 9, 1953, p. 19.

⁶Whittaker, op. cit., p. 21.

⁷Ibid.

remembered as the year the Mayor awarded skiing's first prize, "a fine set of matched spoking pipes",⁸ to an eight year old schoolboy.

Torgal Moren Ski Champion 1903-1907

It was fellow Scandinavian, Torgal Moren, who shortly after 1900 succeeded Jeldness as ski champion of the Rossland Winter Carnivals. He won the event for the first time in 1903, and in the ensuing years won the Jeldness Trophy three times, though not in succession. After the ski jumping competition on Monte Cristo Mountain in 1907, a controversy developed with Moren over the conditions of the award.⁹ However, he was presented with the original Jeldness Trophy for permanent retention following the event, as Jeldness had agreed to present a second trophy for the same meet in 1908.¹⁰

In discussing ski jumping events at this time, Moren wrote, "that jumpers made three jumps as part of the regular competition, with judges deciding on points of merit and style".¹¹ Senior contestants were classified as amateur or professional and according to one report, Torgal Moren, winner of the meet in 1907, had entered the amateur division. A reporter describing Moren's record jump, wrote of the event,

⁸Goodchild, op. cit., p. 12.

⁹The Daily Province, Vancouver, B.C., February 18, 1907.

¹⁰Whittaker, op. cit., p. 23.

¹¹Olaus Jeldness, "Skiing the Royal Sport of the Northland", The American Scandinavian, 1909, p. 4.

saying, "He crouched low on his skis, and worked his body up and down from the knees...At the jump off, he sprang high in the air...he skimmed along like a flying bird high above the heads of the crowd...he landed a considerable distance beyond where he landed on his first jump...ninety feet shouted Paul Renwick".¹² Following the regular competition, a professional jumping event, a twin ski jumping exhibition, and a special competition for boys under fifteen, concluded activities at the 1907 Carnival.¹³

The Jeldness Trophy 1908

It was in 1907 that the Rossland Carnival Association became incorporated, and among the original trustees were J. S. C. Frazer, L. A. Campbell, A. B. Mackenzie, and Thomas S. Gilmour.¹⁴ Olaus Jeldness, in 1908, presented the Association with a second ski trophy in his name, which they resolved would be a perpetual award, never to be retained by the winner. The inscription on the trophy was appropriately written by Jeldness himself, though he stated in a letter to Mr. J. S. C. Frazer that he had changed a few words and added two lines to the one suggested by W. J. Nelson of Rossland. The final approved wording on the Trophy read:

¹²The Daily Province, op. cit.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Letter from Olaus Jeldness to Mr. A. C. Cameron, Trail, B.C., July 3, 1932. (Personal papers of Mrs. A. G. Hersloff, Spokane, Washington.)

Play not for gain, but sport,
 Leap not for gold, but glee;
 Oh Youth! Play well thy part
 Whate'er Life's game may be.¹⁵

"It is, I hope, with pardonable pride", Jeldness wrote in the letter, "that I recall hearing Sir Charles Tupper recite these lines...and predicting that these sentiments will be engraved on championship trophies of Canada for generations to come."¹⁶

Minnie Engen Ski Pioneer 1910

Interest in the local ski club declined shortly after 1907, though it appears interest in the sport continued mainly through the influence of the winter carnivals. It was around 1910 that M. "Minnie" Engen emerged from the small town of Phoenix, B.C., and he dominated competitive ski events in British Columbia until 1917. Engen, born in Orkidahl, Norway, in 1886, was less than a year old when his family moved to the United States. "My father was an excellent skier", Engen wrote, "and he taught me the principles of skiing".¹⁷

Returning to Norway in 1895, the young skier won his first of many ski prizes at the age of ten, and then came back to North America where he pioneered skiing in Canada and the United States.¹⁸ Engen came to Canada in 1902 and settled

¹⁵Letter from Olaus Jeldness to Mr. J.S.C. Fraser, Rossland, B.C. (Personal papers, Mrs. A.G. Hersloff, Spokane, Washington.)

¹⁶Letter from Olaus Jeldness to Mr. J.S.C. Frazer, Rossland, B.C. (Personal paper, Mrs. A. G. Hersloff, Spokane, Washington.)

¹⁷M. Engen, "The Life Story of Minnie Engen", Personal Paper, Allan Engen, Denver, Colorado.

¹⁸Ibid.

in Phoenix, B.C., a small mining town in the interior. He was instrumental in organizing a ski club, likely one of the earliest in Western Canada. To this club he was able to attract a number of young men interested in training for the competitive ski events, that had become popular at the winter carnivals. In an autobiography of his ski life, Engen recalls, "From 1910 to 1917 I jumped at the Rossland Winter Carnival, and won the Canadian Championship every time...I entered the Monte Cristo Mountain eight-mile ski race seven times and took first prize six times and second, once...On the one and one half mile downhill race I took first, four times, and second, once. In 1925, at the Canadian Championship, I beat Nels Nelson on the fourth and final jump and won..."¹⁹ Certainly one of the west's most colorful ski men, Engen continued in the realm of competitive skiing until as late as 1939, when he was listed as one of Canada's three official ski jumping judges.²⁰

The Trail-Rossland Ski Club, 1929

Efforts to start a new club began around 1920, but it was not until 1929 that the Trail-Rossland Ski Club was officially founded.²¹ Mr. Trygve Nora called the inaugural

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Personal Correspondence, Allan Engen, November, 1968.

²¹The Trail Times, Red Mountain Ski Club Edition, November 17, 1965, p. 10.

meeting on October 29, 1929, in the office of a Mr. E. A. G. Colls, and they, along with Bert Bothum, Robert Lepsoe and Ollie Nyhus, formed the nucleus of the new club. At a subsequent meeting, the Trail-Rossland Ski Club was officially founded, with Mr. R. Lepsoe elected President.²² Their headquarters were located in the clubhouse of the local Golf and Country Club, and on the hills of the nearby fairways, cross country races, ski tours and ski jumping meets were held.

The Rossland and Trail Ski Clubs, 1931

In 1931, several members met and proposed that the existing club be moved to Rossland, though this suggestion met strong opposition from skiing interests in Trail. The following year, another meeting was called, again by Mr. Nora, in an attempt to sort out the differences. This meeting resulted in the formation of a separate Rossland Ski Club, which excluded any amalgamation with Trail.²³ During the summer of 1932, with a new executive, headed by T. Nora, the Rossland Ski Club began construction "of a spacious cabin near the water reservoir... just above the George Topliss farm".²⁴ Soon after 1931, the separate Trail Ski Club was formed, with Dr. J. Mittum as President. To match the efforts of their counterparts in Rossland, they erected a similar clubhouse "in the vicinity of

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

Thorreson's farm."²⁵

Modern Skiing in the Kootenay, 1935

During the last half of the nineteen-thirty decade, membership increased, and both clubs expanded their facilities and developed new ski trails. Club tournaments became popular, and among the area ski clubs the Kootenay Ski Championships evolved to become the major event of the season. It was held annually, and rotated between the centres of Kimberley, Nelson, Trail, and Rossland. It was not until 1937 that the annual championships included downhill and slalom events.²⁶ Night skiing became a popular innovation at the Rossland Club in 1939, when floodlights were installed, which extended the day-time use of the slalom and jump hills until late evening.²⁷

With the outbreak of the Second World War, all major ski events were discontinued, though club events remained popular. In 1940, the famous Grey Mountain Grind ski race was introduced to stimulate local interest in competitive skiing. Designed specifically to accommodate all types of skiing, it included elements of the popular competitive events at the time. The race, which began at "Grey's top, called for a tight slalom near the start, then a long downhill run,

²⁵Ibid., p. 11.

²⁶Ibid., p. 13.

²⁷The Trail Times, Red Mountain Ski Club Edition, November 17, 1965, p. 43.

culminated by two miles of cross country, as the race ended at Elsing Park".²⁸

II REVELSTOKE

Ski Jumping Capital of Canada 1914

Revelstoke was likely one of the earliest centres of competitive skiing in Canada.²⁹ Local skiers participated extensively in winter carnival and other ski competitions, which were popular around the turn of the century. A rather small inland city, Revelstoke was nonetheless strategically situated on the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway coming from Eastern Canada, and at the junction of the famed Kootenay Lakes. The original ski club disappeared shortly after 1900 and ski activity was not heard of until around 1914, when a group led by Sigurd Halverson and B. R. Atkins formed what is now the modern Revelstoke Ski Club.³⁰

A suitable ski hill had been discovered around 1912 by Adolph Maland and Jack Moxness on nearby Mount Revelstoke.³¹ Much of the credit for developing the ski jumping potential of the hill went to the club's first President, Sigurd Halverson, and a young native Canadian athlete, Nels Nelson. Nelson

²⁸Personal correspondence, Mr. P. Adler, Red Mountain Ski Club Society, July 1967.

²⁹The Trail Times, Red Mountain Ski Club Edition, November 17, 1965, p. 30.

³⁰The Vancouver Daily Province, December 27, 1924, p. 31.

³¹Statement, C. Gottaas, Camrose, Alberta, July, 1967, Personal Interview.

became the club's first hill captain and one of Revelstoke's most famous skiers. He first came to the area in 1913, and soon became a driving force in organizing and promoting the interests of the ski club, especially with respect to ski jumping. It was largely through his efforts that the "big hill" was eventually built, and that "distance ski jumping came to Canada".³² The hill, in its natural state, was relatively well contoured for ski jumping, and since few improvements were necessary, jumpers were soon able to make use of the facility. Blessed with such a unique natural feature overlooking the town, local skiers lost little time in expanding the popularity of the sport throughout the West.³³

Ski Jumping Records 1916-1925

Stories of great ski tournaments make up much of the history of skiing in the Revelstoke area. As early as 1916, reports on skiing suggested the establishment of "world's ski jumping records", on what had become known as the city's "Suicide Hill".³⁴ They promoted a two-day winter carnival that same year by stating "that the world's ski jumping record would be broken by the home town favourite, Nels Nelson." It was

³²Official Programme, Revelstoke Tournament of Champions, Revelstoke, B.C., 1916.

³³Official Programme, Revelstoke Tournament of Champions, Revelstoke, B.C., 1957, p. 4.

³⁴The Victoria Daily Times, February 10, 1916, p. 11.

rumoured that he had jumped 183 feet in practice, "a performance" they said, "which exceeded the existing record of 177 feet, set that year in Norway".³⁵ Due to an unfortunate ankle injury and poor weather conditions, Nelson managed only 147 feet in the event of 1916. This was far short of the world's top performance, but it apparently exceeded the existing Canadian record by twelve feet. Local ski officials, in an attempt to have the jump ratified as a national record, supported the validity of their claim by suggesting "that at this event contestants from more than four recognized clubs took part".³⁶ This, they felt, satisfied the minimal conditions necessary for the establishment of a record. By 1920, Nelson had become a sporting celebrity in the town and surrounding area. His most recent performance of 185 feet was also announced as "a World and Canadian Amateur Ski Jumping Record."³⁷ By 1924, Nelson's numerous record claims had been extended to include jumps of "202 authenticated and verified feet".³⁸ By 1925, the record was officially listed at 212 feet, though some argued that Nelson had succeeded in jumping 235 feet in competition. However, tremendous hill pressure, coupled with his weak landing, caused him "to touch the snow

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Official Program, Seventh Annual Tournament, Revelstoke Ski Club, Revelstoke, B.C., February 8, 1921.

³⁸The Vancouver Daily Province, December 27, 1924, p. 31.

with his fingers".³⁹ Though he recovered his balance and finished the jump standing, the record claim, they said, "was disallowed due to that momentary touch."⁴⁰

The Training of Jumpers 1925

A number of the ski club's officials were responsible for the preparation and training of the many Revelstoke jumpers. Promising youngsters exhibiting an interest in the sport were first introduced to a small junior jump, on which they learned the basic fundamentals. Upon acquiring the necessary form and distance, they were allowed to try a larger hill. Individual progress was more or less determined by the senior jumping hill officers, who in addition to coaching, also decided when the skier was ready for the big event. In this kind of program, they said, "there were very few failures."⁴¹ Among the outstanding juniors of the 1925 era were "Ivind Nelson, Cecil Stone and Gordon Hooley", whom had all won their respective classes with jumps of over 130 feet.⁴² Nelson continued to establish national and international record performances on the local ski hill. It was on February 4, 1925, that he recorded a leap of 240 feet.⁴³ This

³⁹The Trail Times, February 6, 1925, p. 6.

⁴⁰The Vancouver Daily Province, December 27, 1924, p. 31.

⁴¹The Vancouver Daily Province, December 27, 1924, p. 31.

⁴²_____, "Revelstoke Ski Club Report," Canadian Ski Annual, 1928-1929, p. 72.

⁴³Official Program, Revelstoke Tournament of Champions, Revelstoke, B.C., 1957, p. 4.

was considered by most ski authorities in North America as an authentic world's amateur record. An application was made to the C.A.S.A. following the event, in an effort to have the jump recognized and approved. However, four years later the claim was rejected, since the meet in question had not been officially sanctioned by the National Association.⁴⁴ In spite of this decision, most ski clubs in Canada considered Nelson's jump to have been a record, which stood until 1930, when Adolph Badrutt, of Switzerland, reportedly jumped 246 feet.⁴⁵

The Annual Ski Tournament, 1929

The Revelstoke Ski Tournament of 1929 was extended to five days, and it was that year that Peter Sandnes, of Burns Lake, B.C., won the combined cross country racing and jumping event. Nels Nelson, as usual, won the special jumping competition with a jump of 171 feet.⁴⁶ In the B and C events, "L. Bennison and R. Jamieson", two juniors from Revelstoke, "displayed both nerve and skill", it was said, "by sliding over the big hill, and achieving distances of 66 and 83 feet."⁴⁷ At this particular meet, a number of Western Branch Ski Officials were in attendance, and this resulted in the events

⁴⁴R. J. Verne, "Pioneer Days of Skiing in Western Canada", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1928-1929), p. 82.

⁴⁵"Revelstoke Ski Club Report", Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1928-1929), p. 72.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷"Revelstoke Ski Club Report", Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1931-1932), p. 79.

being run more efficiently. However, their presence "lent an altogether different tone to this annual winter sports test."⁴⁸ By making the meet more competitive for the skiers, they had apparently removed much of the local color and enthusiasm from the jumping events.

Ski Jumping Fever, 1932, and A World's Record, 1933

With the Winter Olympic Games scheduled to be held at Lake Placid, New York in 1932, interest in ski jumping reached a peak early in the ski season. This marked the first time that an international ski event, such as this, would be held in North America. It also sharpened local interest in ski jumping, and concern was being expressed in Revelstoke over the world's long distance jumping record, currently held by Norway's Sigmund Ruud. Following Nels Nelson's 240 foot record performance in 1925, Ruud extended the mark to 264 feet in 1926. Several public attempts at the world's jumping record by Bob Lymbourne resulted in an upsurge of interest for the annual tournament in 1932. Due to rather stringent economic conditions, a large entry was not expected. Nevertheless, a total of eighty-seven entries were finally received, with four from as far away as Banff, Alberta.⁴⁹

Local patronage again made the event a success financially, and it was native-born Bob Lymbourne, "fresh from

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

the Olympic Games",⁵⁰ who made it a sporting success as well. Unable to approach the world's record during the regular competition, due to adverse hill conditions, Lymbourne made an unofficial record leap of 269 feet out of the regular competition. Even though the jump was made in the presence of C.A.S.A. judges, and supported by sworn affidavits validating the performance, it could not be recognized, since the jump had not been made in the official competition. However, Lymbourne was awarded the official FIS ski jumping record, when in 1933, he officially registered a jump of 287 feet at the club's annual tournament.⁵¹

Amateurs or Professional Jumpers 1934

By 1934, the Revelstoke Ski Club was resplendently enjoying the immeasurable success of its many great ski jumpers. With representatives such as Nels and Ivind Nelson, Hans Gunnarson and Robert Lymbourne, they almost always brought home the tournaments' top awards. The competitive rivalry of these, plus many others, had, during the past year, helped to push the local hill record to an astonishing 287 feet. Many of the knowledgeable men in the club expressed the view "that the limit had no doubt been reached."⁵² However, towards the end of the year, members began to voice concern

⁵⁰"Revelstoke Ski Club Reports", Canadian Ski Year Book, (Montreal: 1934,) p. 75.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

over what they referred to "as an apparent shortage of elite jumpers appearing in the major tournaments in the West."⁵³

The pressure of competition, and the financial burdens it created for skiers and clubs, had, it seems, gradually reduced the number of top performers. Changes would soon be necessary regarding the financial treatment accorded the leading skiers, and some consideration would have to be made in order to compensate them for the sacrifices they had made "for the good of the sport".⁵⁴ Most tournaments across the West, at this time, were beginning to suffer financially, due to the increasing absence of many of the big names in skiing. These skiers were often unable to meet the ever-increasing demands made by ski clubs for their services at ski tournaments and carnivals.

The Revelstoke Ski Club, in 1935, suggested that some form of financial assistance be made available to the competing skiers, in order to ensure the continued development of high calibre performers. They went so far as to suggest that the C.A.S.A. select an exclusive group of "Class AA Skiers",⁵⁵ who would be eligible to receive special financial consideration with respect to their appearance at major ski competitions. These individuals would perform at tournaments on an exhibition

⁵³ Ibid., p. 76.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ _____, "Club Reports", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal; 1935), p. 101.

basis, acting as promoters for the sport, and supported by a percentage of the gate receipts. It was their belief that increased public support would follow the regular appearances of these experts. It was this action that prompted the C.A.S.A., in 1930, to begin to investigate the amateur status of several western skiers, who were apparently receiving sums of money in excess of the allowable travelling expenses. The American professional ski jumpers of the 1920 period, had enjoyed certain financial benefits while on their extended nationwide tours, and the "Class AA Skiers", as was proposed, "might bring back the old pro-circuit"⁵⁶ which, the C.A.S.A. felt, would not be in the best interests of amateur skiing.

Alpine Skiing and Expansion: 1939-1940

The twenty-first annual tournament, in 1935, was also planned as a pre-Olympic test for the Canadian skiers. However, a conflict between the rival governing authorities in the east and west was at its peak, and the meet suffered as a result. Many of the Eastern competitors had subsequently withdrawn their entries after being advised by the C.A.S.A. not to participate in the Revelstoke event until their respective associations had negotiated a settlement. In February of 1939, the Western Canadian Ski Championships were held in Revelstoke. The meet had by now become a four-day affair, which encompassed open and closed classes in the four senior men's ski events,

⁵⁶Ibid.

(jumping, cross country, downhill and slalom), as well as, downhill and slalom events for women.⁵⁷ This development ended a ski jumping era for Revelstoke, yet even as hill skiing became popular, ski jumping remained supreme as late as 1940.

III LADIES' SKIING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1901-1930

Shortly after 1900, skiing interest in parts of the west appeared to decline. It was not until around 1910, when a renewed enthusiasm for the sport swept the country, that women's skiing began to develop. Even as late as 1920, Western club reports indicated a relatively small number of women participating, however, the standard of performance by certain individuals during this period seems to indicate more than just a casual interest in the sport.

Early Appearances in Competitive Ski Events, 1910

Western clubs, in general, looked upon skiing primarily as a competitive sport for males, and the opportunity to ski was extended to relatively few women. One authority suggests "that it was about 1910, at Phoenix, B.C., that competitive skiing was first taken up by the ladies".⁵⁸ No reference is made as to what events were held or who the competitors might have been though it is believed the events took the form of a

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Kennington Hague, "The Ladies of the West", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935), p. 46.

cross country race.

The town of Revelstoke witnessed the early appearance of a ladies' ski event in 1912, as Mrs. A. Gummanson was reported to have won the ladies' cross country event. Having learned her skiing in Canada, it seems appropriate to consider her as being Canada's first lady ski racer. She remained active in the sport for many years and as late as 1935, still participated in competitive ski events against all comers at the tender age of fifty.⁵⁹

Isobel Coursier, Woman Ski Jumping Champion 1924

Another Revelstoke lady, Miss Isobel Coursier, became famous for her exploits on the ski jumping hill. Throughout the west and the North Western United States, her presence at ski meets attracted large numbers of inquisitive spectators, and by 1924, she had earned the title of "Lady Ski Jumping Champion of the World".⁶⁰ As a high school student that year, she won the ladies' event at the Revelstoke ski tournament with what was considered a perfect jump of ninety-eight feet.⁶¹ She went on to become a physical education instructor at the Provincial Normal School in Victoria, but returned to her hometown from time to time to demonstrate her skills on "the Big Hill".⁶²

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 47.

⁶⁰The Vancouver Daily Province, Dec. 27, 1924, p. 31.

⁶¹"Revelstoke Ski Club Report", Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1928-1929), p. 72.

⁶²Hague, op. cit., p. 47.

Her accomplishments were remarkable for a lady, since the Revelstoke jumping hill was, at the time, considered one of the largest in the world.

Downhill Proficiency Events 1926

At Revelstoke, in 1926, the traditional straight run for ladies down the landing hill of the ski jump, was modified into a more refined test of skiing ability. Introduced as a judged downhill run for ladies, contestants were required to execute prescribed turns to complete the course. The competitors' speed, along with the points awarded by the judges for execution and style, determined the winner. This idea appears to have been an attempt by the club to encourage style and technique among their lady skiers. Over the years, this type of event became popular and soon spread to Vancouver and other ski centres of the West.⁶³

Daisy Bourdon - Cross Country Ski Champion 1930

Miss Daisy Bourdon, secretary of the Revelstoke Ski Club in 1930, reigned for many years as the undisputed champion in ladies' cross country racing. Having begun her competitive career in 1923, she participated in almost every titled ski meet in the West, and was said to have captured a total of twenty-four first placings, and three seconds.⁶⁴ The state of

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴D. Bourdon, "The Revelstoke Ski Club", Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1928), p. 46.

ladies' skiing in the West, around 1928, was such that they concentrated chiefly on cross country. It appears that even this was rather limited, as most of the women racers were not familiar with even the basic racing and waxing techniques. "Climbing was next to impossible", said Bourdon, "as candle or paraffin wax"⁶⁵ became the standard application for their skis. Women's racing equipment was exceedingly poor by today's standards, and it could seldom be relied upon to last the entire race. However, by 1930, most of them enjoyed the benefits of properly waxed skis and the latest cross country racing equipment.

During the 1930 decade the cross country race for ladies became a regular event at most ski centres in the West. Two classes were usually contested, and the racing distance was more or less standardized at about five miles. "It was quite common", according to one observer, "to have twelve or fifteen entries for championship events, with competitors from six or seven outside places."⁶⁶

IV THE VANCOUVER AREA

Early Skiing 1920

Skiing did not become popular around Vancouver until after 1920, when ski pioneers began to explore the adjacent

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 47.

⁶⁶Hague, op. cit., p. 47.

mountains, seeking suitable ski terrain. "Skis in those days were a rarity", according to Rudolph J. Verne, who describes one of his early outings in May, 1920. "I well remember our walk down the main street", he recalls in a letter to a friend, "how our snow skates aroused such great interest and curiosity".⁶⁷ Verne, along with many others, soon discovered an area that was considered "a skiers' paradise"⁶⁸ in the mountain country surrounding the West Coast city. One authority credits Oscar Perrson with having been one of the first to open up Hollyburn Ridge around 1920, and later with building a lodge and ski jump near First Lake.⁶⁹

Vancouver Ski Potential Supports Many Clubs

Vancouver's nearby mountain country was ideally suited for the development of skiing. Several excellent ski areas were to be found in their natural state, surrounding both Hollyburn Ridge and Grouse Mountain. This feature perhaps explains how, by 1930, no less than five large ski clubs were operating in the city. These clubs tended to specialize and emphasize certain aspects of skiing in their program. The discriminating skier in Vancouver was able to select the organization which offered the program most suitable to him.

⁶⁷R. J. Verne, "President's Message," Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1926-1927), p. 47.

⁶⁸Personal Correspondence, Mrs. R. B. MacDougal, Vancouver, B.C., September, 1967.

⁶⁹Personal Correspondence, Mrs. B. Kahldahl, Vancouver, B.C., October 1967.

Skiing continued to grow in popularity on the west coast during the 1930 decade, with a corresponding increase in the number of agencies serving the skiing public. Ski competitions flourished during these years, and an inter-club event, which began on a small scale in 1928, evolved into a full scale championship by 1930. The Tupper and Steel shield became the coveted ski trophy awarded annually to the skier judged as the Pacific Coast Ski Champion in combined, jumping and cross country. Axel Sneis, of the Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club, was awarded the first championship in 1929, following a closely contested competition with Olav Tellefsen of Grouse Mountain.⁷⁰

The Viking Athletic Club

Perhaps the oldest of the many clubs in Vancouver was the Viking Athletic Club, founded in 1922 by R. J. Verne.⁷¹ The original membership was predominantly made up from skiers of Swedish extraction who had, for several years earlier, enjoyed the ski country on Hollyburn Ridge. In 1929 Professor P. A. Boving, of the University of British Columbia, re-organized the club to include other sports as well as skiing, namely track and field and soccer. A special ski section of the larger athletic club joined the C.A.S.A. in 1929.

⁷⁰_____, "Western Report", Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1928-1929), p. 31.

⁷¹R. J. Verne, "Western Ski Club Reports", Canadian Skiing, (Toronto: 1931), p. 90.

The club's most famous athlete was Eric Sandstrom, who was at the time, considered one of the top cross country racers in the world. In 1930 he had entered the 50 kilometre cross country event at Burn's Lake, B.C., winning the race with a time of four hours, thirty-five minutes and fifty seconds. He finished the race eight minutes ahead of Paul Gottaas of Camrose, who, up until that time, had been considered the undefeated champion of the West.⁷² Sandstrom's time for that race was reportedly the best ever recorded in North America for that distance. Though relatively unknown at this time on this continent, Sandstrom had been among the top skiers in his native Sweden before coming to Canada.

Grouse Mountain, an Exclusive Ski Club 1926

The Grouse Mountain Ski Club was founded in the fall of 1926 but within two months club membership had been closed, as facilities on the mountain were limited. This rather exclusive club expanded its programme in the fall of 1927 to include a junior ski organization. One of its objectives was to promote competitive skiing among school age youngsters. The juniors paid a reduced membership fee and were able to take advantage of special instructional programmes. The club's ski excursions, inaugurated in 1928, were considered highlights of the season. One such trip "over Grouse Peak and around Dorn Mountain to Thunderbird Ridge" was reported to

⁷²Ibid., p. 92.

have been "more popular than the jumps at Grouse Peak".⁷³ Successful junior competitions were also held in 1930, and the city championship continued to provide keen competition. In 1931, Leonard Brodburg announced that the club had acquired new headquarters, located at Camp Telemark, which included a complex of ski cabins and dormitories for use during both summer and winter. Jack Melville was appointed editor of the club bulletin, "The Skier",⁷⁴ which was published twice monthly, beginning in 1930. This type of publication helped to improve communication and kept club members up to date on current ski news. A somewhat unique event occurred that same year, when the Rev. A. H. Sovereign held a religious service on the mountain at the foot of the big ski jump. The event, referred to as the "Sermon on the Mount",⁷⁵ was attended by over two thousand spectators, including Vancouver's Mayor W. H. Halpin.

A Skiers' Club 1926

A group of skiers, who had been skiing on the Ridge for several years, formed the Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club in 1926.⁷⁶ They had become interested in promoting competitive

⁷³"The Grouse Mountain Ski Club", Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1928-1929), p. 75.

⁷⁴"The Grouse Mountain Ski Club", Canada Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1929-1930), p. 85.

⁷⁵"The Grouse Mountain Ski Club", Canada Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1930-1931), p. 86.

⁷⁶Ibid.

skiing and, by 1928, were holding regular competitions in both jumping and cross country. These events culminated in the Annual Club Championship for the right to the J. B. Leyland Trophy, awarded each year to the club's All-Around Ski Champion. The first recipient of this award was Fred Fladmark, who won the honour in 1928 by registering the top combined performance in both jumping and cross country.

The club held its first ladies' championship on April 1, 1928, as eleven ladies entered a two-mile cross country race. The winner was Miss Doris Parker, who covered the distance in 20 minutes, 42 seconds, while second place went to Miss Daisy Bourden, and third to Millie Kennedy.⁷⁷ In order to encourage and develop a greater interest in competitive skiing, the club sponsored an annual team skiing event, open to all Western Canadian Ski Clubs. The event was described "as taking the form of a short cross country race in the morning, with jumping in the afternoon".⁷⁸

By 1930, many younger members had been attracted to the ski hills. It was reported "that youngsters of from eight to ten years could often be seen trying out telemarks and swings, in spite of their many spills". The facilities at the ski camp had been built and were owned by "Messrs. Pearson,

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Personal Correspondence, Mrs. R. B. MacDougal, Vancouver, B.C., September, 1967.

Anderson and Israels".⁷⁹ These were continually being improved upon every year in order to better accommodate members and the general public. Open jumping events, held during the Easter holiday period in 1930, met with a favourable response, as it was reported that on Good Friday "over 1,500 people climbed the three and a half mile trail to the jump site", which the club claimed as "a record for public enthusiasm".⁸⁰

The Vancouver Ski Club Attracts Great Athletes

Gordon Billingsley was elected President of the Vancouver Ski Club when it came into existence in 1929. This young club was primarily interested in ski jumping and cross country racing, and shared Hollyburn Ridge with the older and established Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club.⁸¹ In a short span of two years their membership had tripled, much to the dissatisfaction of other local clubs, since several of their top athletes had been lured into joining the young Vancouver Ski Club. A large log cabin was built near the ski camp, which served as the official clubhouse and meeting area.

Over the years, many great competitors represented the Vancouver Ski Club, however, in 1931, Harold Smejda of the Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club applied for membership and became a welcome addition. This move created a somewhat disturbing

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹"The Vancouver Ski Club", Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1928-1929), p. 70.

situation with the older Hollyburn Pacific Club, which had on occasion, lost top competitive skiers to other ski clubs in the province. The loss of Smejda was regarded as a somewhat tragic occurrence, since he was considered one of the top all-round skiers in the country. Besides winning the Vancouver Ski Club championship that year, he went on to capture the Canadian Combined and Cross Country Championships at Revelstoke, the Combined event at Seattle, Washington, and the Cross Country event at Portland, Oregon.⁸² By the end of the 1931 ski season, Axel Sneis, Harold Belsvik, A. Hagen and Fred Finkenhagen, had all left their previous clubs to join the Vancouver Ski Club, making it one of the most formidable competitive ski organizations in Canada.⁸³ Unfortunately, by 1932, several of their top competitors had either returned to Europe or moved elsewhere in North America. In spite of a lack of top flight athletes, interest was maintained by the efforts of club captains, Chris Engh, Lars Gulliksen, Mickey Mitchell and Arthur Johannsen. Miss Bertha Haigh had become the club's leading lady athlete, as she reportedly won every ski event she had entered that year.⁸⁴

Tom Mobraaten joined the club in 1933 and began a competitive career that would see him dominate American and

⁸²"Report of the Eleventh Annual Tournament of the C.A.S.A.", Canadian Skiing, (Toronto: 1931), p. 20.

⁸³"The Vancouver Ski Club", Canadian Skiing, (Toronto: 1931), p. 71.

⁸⁴"Vancouver Ski Club Reports", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1932), p. 84.

Canadian ski events for several years. That same year, Mobraaten led a Canadian ski jumping team of Henry Sotvedt, Finn Fladmark and Fred Finkenhagen to a series of eight team victories throughout the states of Washington and Oregon.⁸⁵ Among the ladies, Miss Peggy Harland made an auspicious appearance by winning the Senior Ladies' Cross Country Event at the Provincial Championships. This feat was followed by her victory in the 1934 Western Canadian Slalom Championship, which was considered a remarkable achievement for a first attempt at slalom racing.⁸⁶ As in other parts of Canada, it was becoming more difficult during the mid-1930 period to attract spectators to the jumping competitions. This fact resulted in a considerable loss of revenue for most clubs, making the maintenance of a favourable financial position increasingly difficult.

An Alpine Oriented Ski Club 1929

The Vancouver Winter Sports Club, founded in 1927, did not join the Western Branch of the C.A.S.A. until 1929.⁸⁷ This club was primarily interested in the alpine skiing disciplines of downhill and slalom. To this end, it held the first official slalom race on the West Coast in 1932.⁸⁸ The

⁸⁵Personal Correspondence, Henry Sotvedt, Vancouver, B.C., September, 1968.

⁸⁶"Vancouver Ski Club Reports", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1934), p. 85.

⁸⁷"The Vancouver Winter Sports Club", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1932-1933), p. 82.

⁸⁸Ibid.

Hudson Bay Company donated a trophy for slalom competition among the Vancouver Ski Clubs. The first such course was considered a fair test of one's skiing ability, as it had a vertical drop of 560 feet, and an average gradient of almost 32 degrees. The winner of that first slalom race was Mr. H. M. Davidson, representing the Vancouver Winter Sports Club. His winning time of one minute and six seconds, was only two seconds faster than second place finisher, K. H. S. Hague. Competitors were required to ski the course twice, and an average of their two times was taken for the final results.⁸⁹

Grouse Mountain Ski Club Incorporated 1932

The Grouse Mountain Ski Club, in 1932, was the first club on the West Coast to become incorporated under the Societies Act of British Columbia.⁹⁰ Ski instruction was offered to beginners as part of a club program and was first directed by Bob Nield and Gordon Harrington during the winter of 1932. A highlight of that season was a night ski jumping event, held as part of the New Year's Eve celebrations. Burning flares lit the jump hill and in spectacular fashion, seven jumpers successfully completed the show. Downhill races were held that year on Dam Mountain, while slalom events took place on Grouse Peak. These became annual fixtures, culminating

⁸⁹"The Vancouver Winter Sports Club", Canadian Ski Yearbook (Montreal: 1933-1934), p. 87.

⁹⁰"The Grouse Mountain Ski Club", Canadian Ski Yearbook (Montreal, 1932-1933), p. 91.

in the club championships held during the month of April.⁹¹

Bob Lymburne supervised the construction of a new jump trestle prior to the 1934 ski season and, with this improved facility, jumping performances soon approached one hundred and fifty feet.⁹²

The Grouse Mountain Ski Club, from 1935 to 1940, enjoyed immeasurable success competitively, financially and socially. Their membership had grown and the ski area and its facilities were continually expanding. All aspects of the sport were well patronized by the juniors, seniors and ladies. Social events, such as picnics, banquets, dances, hikes and informal ski parties were popular and the club soon found itself functioning both in the winter and throughout the summer months as well.

Ski Equipment Unique to the West Coast

West Coast sportsmen were fortunate in having both variety, and a good supply of locally manufactured ski equipment from which to choose. With respect to skis, several local models had proved to be far superior to many of those imported, especially those used for alpine racing or recreational hill skiing. Fred Hall, writing about his experiences on a western ski trip in 1933, remarked "that he was extremely impressed with the many individual varieties of skis and other

⁹¹"The Grouse Mountain Ski Club", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1931-1932), p. 81

⁹²"The Grouse Mountain Ski Club", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1934, p. 67.

equipment available". He identifies their foremost craftsman as being a Mr. Hamish Davidson, who was responsible for the production of what he described as being "a wide range of broad multi-laminated types of skis, which are unbelievably light".⁹³ Other descriptions of this rather unique ski suggest that it had a shallow groove and that the apex of the camber or bend was located midway between the toe iron and the heel. This ski exhibited a remarkable moisture-resistant quality and, due to the fibre composition of the internal laminations and running surfaces of some models, it was stronger and more flexible than its contemporaries. A manufacturer's guarantee "against warping, breakage and other defects"⁹⁴ accompanied the purchase and the results achieved in West Coast competitive events seemed to justify its claim to being a superior alpine ski.

⁹³Fred Hall, "Western Ski Experiences", Canadian Ski Yearbook (Montreal: 1933-1934), p. 4.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 1.

International Alpine Skiing 1933

Due to the lack of snow in the Vancouver area, the 1933 ski season was somewhat shorter than usual. However, in the Vancouver Winter Sports Club, interest in slalom and downhill racing did not appear to suffer, as they took part in more events than all previous years. The first major competition, a slalom race, hosted by the Seattle Ski Club, was held at Snoqualmie Pass. As the only Canadian Club in the competition, the Winter Sports Club was fortunate to win first, third and fourth places from among the more than fifty entries. According to club records, this event was recognized as the first International Slalom Competition held in the United States."⁹⁵ The Western Canadian Amateur Ski Association's Slalom Championship, held on Grouse Mountain, was another big event that same year. Weather conditions were far from ideal as thick fog prevented a clear view of the course, and the lack of snow seriously restricted the racers. At this meet, officials adopted "a system of starting and timing, using a telephone line from start to finish".⁹⁶ This had been used for several years

⁹⁵"The Vancouver Winter Sports Club", Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1934), p. 82.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 83.

with marked success by several local clubs, but had not been common in championship races until then.

1934, a New Era for Hollyburn Pacific

The Vancouver City Championships, hosted in 1934 by the Hollyburn Pacific Club, ended a period of club depression that began in 1929, when many members left the older club for the newly-formed Vancouver Ski Club. However, membership had doubled by 1934 and over two thousand spectators attended the championship events of 1935, which helped to solve their financial problems as well. The club was reported "to be as strong and progressive an organization as it had been during 1930"⁹⁷ and looked to the future with confidence. Hill skiing had become popular by 1935 and downhill and slalom events soon attracted many of the new members. The club indicated "that although jumping and cross country had always been its specialty, they had now taken up this new branch".⁹⁸ The clearing of ski runs and a new slalom course, during the summer of 1935, was designed to keep pace with the growing interest in the alpine aspects of skiing.

⁹⁷"The Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club Reports", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1933-1934), p. 67.

⁹⁸"The Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club Reports", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935-1936), p. 89.

A new clubhouse was completed in time for the winter of 1937,⁹⁹ and in the Nosseeum's Kandahar Race, scheduled for Grouse Mountain on February 24, a team consisting of "Gus Johnson, Ace Lindsay, George Bury, and Bill Brown"¹⁰⁰ emerged as winners, bringing the trophy home to Hollyburn. In ladies' competition, Miss Daisy Bourdon, "Hollyburn's ace lady skier",¹⁰¹ was also successful in winning a gold medal.

Alpine Skiing and the Vancouver Ski Club

Interest in competitive slalom showed a marked increase among Vancouver skiers during the 1934 season. According to one club's report, "almost every weekend found groups of members and their friends laying out practice courses".¹⁰² This aspect of competitive skiing was becoming extremely popular among the ladies, and large entries could be expected, even in club competitions. Following his re-election to the

⁹⁹"The Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club Reports", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935-1936), p. 139.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁰²"Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club Reports", Canadian Ski Yearbook, 1934-1935, p. 174.

presidency in 1935, the club and its members paid a testimonial tribute to Mr. Gordon Billingsley. He had guided the club, "with unselfish devotion," they wrote, "since its founding in 1929."¹⁰³ It was in 1936 that club membership doubled and that "downhill relay races" proved to be one of the most notable events on the club's program.¹⁰⁴ Competitive alpine skiing improved greatly that year, as the club had procured a full complement of the necessary equipment, including poles, flags and a telephone communication system. The newly-elected president of the club, C. J. Hutchinson, wrote in 1936 "that the outlook for skiing in the West has never been brighter."¹⁰⁵

As far as West Coast skiing was concerned, 1937 proved to be another successful year. In an effort to raise funds for the provincial ski championships that year, twelve hundred people turned out to a club-sponsored "evening of ski movies".¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³Ibid.,

¹⁰⁴"Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club Reports", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1936-1937), p. 101.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁰⁶"The Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club Reports", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1938-1939), p. 174.

New downhill and slalom courses had been cleared on Hollyburn Peak in co-operation with the Hollyburn Pacific Club and a new jumping hill was secured. Tom Mobraaten, by then the pride of Vancouver, had been selected to represent Canada at the 1936 Olympics, and Miss Peggy Harlin reportedly won both the ladies' Provincial and National Ski Championships.¹⁰⁷

Problems on Hollyburn Ridge 1938

In 1938, friction between the Hollyburn Pacific and the Vancouver Ski Club resulted in a number of disputes and misunderstandings. There appeared to emerge two distinct skiing groups among the members of both clubs. The older groups were oriented towards the traditional Nordic aspects of jumping and cross country, while the younger members were reported to be more interested in hill skiing, slalom and downhill. It is recorded in the Club Reports of 1938 that "several of the older heads of the sister club...(the Vancouver Ski Club)...and our club decided that much effort and organizing ability was being wasted by running separate tournaments".¹⁰⁸ In order to alleviate this problem, and to promote more extensive tournaments, a meeting was held with representatives from both clubs attending. The outcome of the meeting was the formation of, "The Ski Promotion Committee of Hollyburn Ridge",¹⁰⁹ which was

¹⁰⁷"The Vancouver Ski Club", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1938-1939), p. 168.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

headed jointly by Fred Hudson and Jack Hutchinson. This group performed a very useful function in promoting the skiing interests of both clubs. In spite of the many references to it being a "Ski Commotion Committee",¹¹⁰ they organized and conducted many excellent competitions, run in an orderly fashion. Most of them also started on time, "much to the disgust of some of the older competitors, who had been used to rolling up to the starting line a half hour late, knowing full well the race would be held up until their arrival".¹¹¹ The committee's main task appeared to be that of co-ordinating the efforts of the sports and development committees of both clubs and to investigate future expansion plans so that the interests of both groups would be served.

General Ski Club Development After 1934

With the advent of hill skiing, more alpine oriented ski clubs appeared on the scene. The Pioneer Amateur Ski Club made its appearance in 1935 and in spite of poor snow conditions, attracted over seventy members in its first year. They were located in a cabin at Hawthorne Creek, and in 1936 installed floodlights. It was suggested "that ski enthusiasts not content with the evils of the day, might continue during the evening."¹¹² By 1937, the club operated both a nordic and an

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 169.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 179.

¹¹²"The Pioneer Amateur Ski Club", Canadian Ski Year-book, (Montreal: 1935-1936), p. 136.

alpine program, as slalom and downhill courses had been developed.

The Tyee Ski Club, primarily a recreational club, also appeared on the Vancouver scene in 1935. Its membership was comprised of a group of skiers, who had during the past summer and winter, operated in the Grouse Mountain area.¹¹³ Their principal interests were in activities of a recreational-social nature. As a result, ski hikes, informal competitions, social evenings and club parties, held a high priority in their program. It was at this club, in 1936, that Miss Gertrude Wepsala appeared in her first competition, winning all the women's events. She followed this with second place finishes in the Provincial Championships and in the Holt-Wilson Trophy Competitions, which represented the Ladies' Ski Championship of Canada.

During 1938, skiers from the Tyee Ski Club emerged as the slalom and downhill power on the West Coast. The club held an alpine ski race on Sasomat Hill, which was the first such meet ever held within the boundaries of the city of Vancouver.¹¹⁴ A convincing victory in the Noseeum's Kandahar of 1938 ended the season for Gertrude Wepsala, of the Tyee Club, who had that year won every major ladies' ski event in Western Canada and the Pacific Northwest Region of the United States.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 137.

¹¹⁴"The Tyee Ski Club", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1937-1938), p. 173.

Another group of enthusiastic skiers formed a ski club in November of 1936, since they felt this to be "the speediest means of awakening Vancouver" to the merits of a virtually unknown ski country", that they felt "was unequalled locally."¹¹⁵ They considered that the skiing in Mount Seymour Park was potentially the finest winter sports ground within the metropolitan area of Vancouver and the club was appropriately called the Mount Seymour Ski Club. During 1938 the club continued to grow, and with the help of good snow conditions, excellent skiing was available until late spring. The club participated primarily in downhill and slalom events, and instructional classes were conducted for the first time during the 1938 season by Dick Schaich, a visiting Swiss ski expert. A first-aid station was equipped and manned by qualified St. John's Ambulance personnel and maintained by the club near the main camp throughout the winter.

A program of ski instruction was carried out in 1939, with Peter Vajda acting as the co-ordinator. During the Easter holidays, he conducted a series of mass ski instruction sessions, under the auspices of the Provincial Department of Recreation and Physical Education.¹¹⁶ Skiing in Vancouver received a great impetus in 1939 when the Vancouver Ski Zone successfully negotiated the implementation of the North Shore Park Develop-

¹¹⁵"Mount Seymour Ski Club", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1936-1937), p. 141.

¹¹⁶"The Vancouver Ski Club", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal, 1939-1940), p. 164.

ment Program. This project, it was hoped, would lead to the creation of a "Public Winter Park", which would include "Hollyburn, Grouse and Seymour Mountains".¹¹⁷ Part of this campaign was initiated at a "skiers' mass meeting", held on July 6, 1939, and attended by over 1,500 skiers.¹¹⁸ Vancouver had, by 1940, experienced a general shift in ski interest from the nordic events to the recreational and competitive aspects of alpine skiing. Club programs concentrated on improving groomed ski slopes, extending the tows and building ski lodges. As well, the implementation of ski instruction programs enjoyed a high priority in most organizations.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 165.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKIING IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION AFTER 1900

I BANFF

Skiing in Banff, 1910

Local residents of Banff were not introduced to skiing until after 1910. It was in that year that the well known Austrian mountain guide, Conrad Kain, arrived in the village and brought with him a pair of Norwegian Telemark skis and an intense interest in skiing. A small ski jump soon appeared on Tunnel Mountain, and it was here that many of the local youngsters were first introduced to the sport of skiing. One of these youthful skiers was Cyril Paris, who recalled, "they did not jump very far, and that they landed on a very gradual slope".¹ However, this experience, it seems, was sufficient to have taught the basic skills to those who later took the sport more seriously, as a competitive endeavour. The only other form of ski activity known at this time was ski touring, and local residents were reported to have explored the nearby valleys on skis during the winter of 1911.²

Skis were difficult to obtain in most parts of the

¹Statement, Cyril Paris, Personal Interview, Banff, Alberta, July, 1967.

²Ibid.

west at this time, and Banff was no exception. However, "Jack Stanley", owner of a boating company, solved the problem by manufacturing skis at his lumber mill near Lake Minnewanka.³ As a close companion of Conrad Kain, Stanley had patterned his skis after the popular Norwegian telemark model. It was from this source that Cyril Paris received his first pair of skis as a Christmas present in 1910. Kain left Banff around 1912, with the result that skiing activity slowly declined until around 1915, when rumours of a Winter Carnival brought forth a renewed interest in skiing and other forms of winter sport.⁴

Skiing Before The Winter Carnivals

By the winter of 1916, skiing in particular, enjoyed the popular support of local youngsters. In anticipation of the events at the proposed winter carnival, several of the children had fashioned primitive skis from hardwood slats, taken from old toboggans. Ski tips were made from the rounded parts of wooden cheese boxes, and these were secured to the feet by a leather toe-strap, which was nailed to the ski.⁵ Ski poles were usually old broom handles, while snow boots or leather moccasins were worn on the feet. "Clothing was heavy

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵C. Paris, "History of Skiing in Banff", (Unpublished paper, Banff, Alberta), 1965.

and warm, "as style and fashion were of little importance in these early days," and people would ski in whatever clothes they had".⁶ Unfortunately, the early enthusiasm of these youngsters led to disappointment at the carnival's first ski jumping meet, as only the visiting adult athletes were allowed to enter the competition.

The Banff Ski Club, 1917

In 1917, just prior to the first winter carnival, the Banff Ski Club was founded by a group of the town's children. "It was a kids' ski club to start with," related Paris, "and though the adults provided some guidance and support, it was us kids who did most of the work."⁷ Following the first winter carnival in 1917, Gus Johnson, a Norwegian ski jumper from Camrose, Alberta, decided to stay in Banff, and it was he who is credited with organizing the club properly. Following the carnival, he arranged numerous ski jumping competitions and it was recalled that as many as "twenty to forty young and enthusiastic jumpers would take part".⁸ Gradually, a few adults were attracted to the sport, perhaps encouraged by the enthusiasm exhibited by their children. Peter Whyte recorded in a notebook a list of the club membership for the 1921 season, which numbered just over thirty. Adult members in the

⁶Ibid.

⁷Paris, op. cit.

⁸Ibid.

club paid a fee of one dollar, while children contributed fifty cents.⁹

II BANFF WINTER CARNIVAL

The First Banff Winter Carnival, 1917

The winter carnival in Banff became one of the great winter sporting events in Western Canada. Not only did it attract many famous skiers, but from all over North America competitors came to take part in both the traditional, and the unique winter sports. The carnival celebration, complete with snow queen, ice palace, social and athletic events, became an annual week-long celebration.

The first carnival, held in 1917, was a result of what originally began as a friendly evening's chat between Norman Luxton and B. W. Collison. These two prominent residents had, for several years, been interested in promoting Banff as both a winter playground and sports centre. On a cool summer evening in 1916, the conversation had shifted to the subject of "how people could be encouraged to visit Banff in the winter time."¹⁰ After a rather lengthy debate, a plan began to evolve, and the week-long festival soon became an official proposal. A request for financial aid was immediately sent to Ottawa, and the reply guaranteed the organizers a few

⁹Records of the Banff Ski Club, Personal Paper of Mr. Peter Whyte, Archives of the Canadian Rockies, Banff, Alberta.

¹⁰The Calgary Herald, January 21, 1939, p. 19.

hundred dollars of federal support. There appeared to be some apathy locally, as several private and public meetings generated only a marginal interest in the venture. However, persistence on the part of the two promoters, Luxton and Collison, and a house-to-house canvas "saw the whole town fall in with the plan,"¹¹ and the first Banff Winter Carnival officially began on February 5, 1917.

A feature attraction at this and subsequent carnivals was the huge ice palace, which served as the focal point for all official events that week. The first such structure, under the supervision of Charley McCauley and Norman Luxton, was built by Austrian prisoners of war from the Cave and Basin Internment Camp.¹² Among the various athletic contests, ski jumping was perhaps considered the feature event and over the years, all the great names of Western Canadian Skiing made their appearance. Peter Whyte of Banff commented in his personal records; "that the first carnival had ski jumping... Maland and Offrim from Camrose...Nels Nelson and Ivand Nelson from Revelstoke, and Nels Willman from Edmonton".¹³ A hill near Tunnel Mountain "just between the Road and the Big Harmon House"¹⁴ was chosen as a site for the jumping events.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Personal Papers, Mrs. Peter Whyte, Archives of the Canadian Rockies, Banff, Alberta.

¹³Personal Papers, Mr. Peter Whyte, (Courtesy Mrs. Catharine Whyte), Banff, Alberta.

¹⁴Ibid.

Cross country skiing and snowshoe races were also popular carnival sports. Chris Gottaas, living in Calgary at the time, had heard reports about the Banff Winter Carnival in January of 1917. Along with another Calgary skier, Jack Moxness, he journeyed to Banff by rail and recalled that some of the big ski names that year included, "Nels Nelson, Adolph Maland, John Hougen and John Digeraas".¹⁵ Not being a ski jumper, Gottaas was interested primarily in the cross country races. Preparing for the race in 1917, he said, "I fixed my skis for cross country, and without any training, entered the cross country race".¹⁶ That first carnival race was won by Adolph Maland, representing the Fram Ski Club of Camrose, Alberta, but he was followed closely by Chris Gottaas. Gottaas returned to these Banff races in succeeding years to win the cross country event an unprecedented three times. The first carnival was hailed as an unequalled success, and each year the festival continued to grow, "as more and more people came to visit Canada's Winter Playground".¹⁷

Women's Ski Events, 1920

By 1914, women's competitive ski racing was reported to have become a regular feature at the ski club in Revelstoke.¹⁸

¹⁵Statement, Chris Gottaas, Personal Interview, Camrose, Alberta, July 1967.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷The Calgary Herald, January 21, 1939, p. 19.

¹⁸H. Kennington Hague, "The Ladies of the West", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal, 1935), p. 46.

In Banff, after 1917, ladies' events were also included on the carnival program. An official booklet published prior to the 1920 carnival included several pictures of women ski racers. Among them were "the Nelson girls of Revelstoke, B.C.", who were active during these years, along with "Pearl Moore and Jannie Edwards",¹⁹ of Banff. In most instances, the ladies' competition at these carnivals took the form of a cross country race, which was usually "from five to six miles long".²⁰ As would often be the case, it took place on a shortened section of the existing men's course. By 1920, ski-joring was another carnival event made popular by the ladies and it attracted a large number of spectators, since it was usually held along the main street.²¹

Professional Ski Jumping at Buffalo Park, 1921

In 1919, a large jump was built on a site near the park's buffalo pound. Peter Whyte wrote of the tournament that year, saying, "there were two good jumpers, Gus Johnson and Adolph Maland, with Johnson apparently being the only one to stand, as Maland found the jump too abrupt".²²

¹⁹B. Collison, "Banff Winter Sports", Winter Carnival Booklet, Banff, Alberta, 1920, p. 37.

²⁰Statement, Cyril Paris, Personal Interview, Banff, Alberta, 10 July 1967.

²¹Ibid.

²²Personal Papers, Mr. Peter Whyte, (Courtesy Mrs. Catharine Whyte), Banff, Alberta.

Sponsoring ski jumping tournaments with professional jumpers had become popular with the public, as well as lucrative, to ski clubs and skiers throughout the U.S.A. and in Western Canada. In a move to encourage a wider spectator appeal, Banff had been granted a date on the American Professional Ski Jumping Circuit for 1921. In the years that followed, many of the great jumpers in North America performed "on the famed Buffalo Park Hill", and among those recalled "were Anders Haugen, Hans Hanson, Harold Hall and Barney Riley".²³ Nels Willman of Camrose describes the hill as being "a real ski flying hill on which you had to jump over one hundred feet before the incline of the hill began".²⁴ A noted amateur competitor himself, Willman was one of the top Western jumpers of the 1920 decade. The professional jumpers contrasted with the amateurs in many ways, but it was in dress that their uniqueness appeared distinct. "The pro's", said Gottaas, wore dark northland ski sweaters, with tight fitting pants or leather leggings to just below the knee".²⁵ The amateur skiers in the west wore more or less their every-day clothing adapted to ski jumping when competing. "We used old mounted police trousers for jumping",²⁶ said Cyril Paris, in speaking of the early equipment used in

²³Statement, Nels Willman, Personal Interview, Camrose, Alberta, 8 July 1968.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Statement, C. Gottaas, Personal Interview, Camrose, Alberta, June, 1968.

²⁶Paris, op. cit.

Banff.

The Winter Carnival, 1922

Carnival activity emphasized participation by everyone, and events were planned to accommodate every possible interest. Among the main events at the fifth annual carnival in 1922 were pony ski-joring, whippet races, snowshoe tug of wars, professional and amateur ski jumping, cross country ski races, obstacle races and novelty events of every description. Ski jumping continued to draw the largest crowds, and the event that year was being billed as one of the "greatest in the world".²⁷ By now it attracted most of the top jumpers from the U.S. professional circuit. In 1922, an American, Lars Haugen, won the professional class, while the amateur jumping event went to Oliver Kaldahl of Glenwood, Minnisota, with Western Canada's great champion, Nels Nelson, capturing the runner-up award. The younger and inexperienced skiers were now accommodated in secondary classes, referred to as B and C events. It was here that many of the local citizenry were represented. Snowshoe races were popular and took many forms on the carnival program. Among those listed were "a one hundred yard dash for men, a quarter mile for boys under sixteen years, a quarter mile for boys under twelve years, a twenty yard dash for ladies, a three mile open race, a hundred yard dash for girls under twelve years, an obstacle race, and

²⁷ _____, Official Program, Fifth Annual Banff Winter Carnival, Banff, Alberta, February, 1922.

a two-twenty yard open men's race".²⁸

III THE COMPETITIVE SKIING ERA

Alpine Ski Instruction 1925

In an effort to encourage the development of tourism in the Banff-Lake Louise area, the Canadian Pacific Railway brought a number of Swiss mountain guides to Canada in 1925. Besides their mountaineering knowledge, they brought with them skis, which were to be used primarily for transportation during the winter. According to Paris, they would often instruct visitors and local residents in the various climbing and ski running techniques.²⁹ Their methods of climbing on skis included variations of the side step, diagonal traverse, and herringbone, while they advocated the traditional steered turns of the time, a telemark to the right and christiania to the left. Though their program of instruction did not continue after they left, they did leave an impression, especially with the younger skiers in Banff. As one of them recalled, "us locals learned our turns from the Swiss mountain guides; Ed Walter, Evert Feuz, and Rudolph Aylomer".³⁰

During their exploratory trips these same guides roamed far and wide through the mountain country surrounding Lake Louise in both summer and winter. They told Cyril Paris

²⁸The Calgary Herald, February 16, 1922, p. 10.

²⁹Paris, op. cit.

³⁰Ibid.

and Cliff White stories about the wonderful skiing, in what is now known as the Ptarmigan Valley and Mt. Assiniboine. Famous ski lodges and commercial resorts, such as Sunshine and Skoki, would later be located there.

The First Slalom Race 1930

Elected to the Presidency of the Banff Ski Club in 1930, Clifford White was responsible for initiating a program of competitive ski development in the Banff area. For the first time, the local club began to pursue the competitive aspects of hill skiing and to actively promote this among its members. In March, 1930, the first slalom race held in the Rockies, was sponsored by the Banff Ski Club and held on Mount Norquay. This event stimulated great interest among local skiers, while at the same time, creating a certain amount of resistance from the more nordic (cross country and jumping) oriented ski clubs. The first course, held in full view of the ski cabin, "was set on a long, open, and exceedingly tricky slope", which had, according to one report, "a vertical drop of three hundred feet".³¹ The Banff Ski Club had hoped, through the success of this first event, to place downhill running on a footing with cross country and ski jumping, which up until then, had tended to dominate competitive skiing in Western Canada.³² G. Cameron Stockand reported in 1931 that the

³¹C. White, "The Banff Ski Club", Canadian Skiing, (Toronto: 1931), p. 34.

³²Ibid.

practice of slalom had become a regular feature on Mount Norquay, "and practically every weekend two or more courses were flagged out".³³

Canadian Ski Championships 1937

By 1935, the virtues of Western Canada and the Rocky Mountains, with respect to its ski potential, were still relatively unknown to most Canadians. "The great ignorance the Canadian East shows towards western alpine skiing," wrote Kutschera, in 1936, "is really shameful".³⁴ However, in spite of some misgivings by eastern ski officials, the Canadian Amateur Ski Association exhibited a degree of confidence in local ski interests by awarding the Dominion Ski Championships to Banff in 1937.³⁵ With the Dominion Ski Championships scheduled for the west, the Canadian Pacific Railway began operating snow trains to Banff in 1937. These train journeys were to become annual events and several were scheduled for the following year. The reported cost of the trip was \$125.00, which included the pullman car fee.³⁶

Banff, Alberta, by 1940, through the efforts of many varied ski interests, had become one of the great Canadian skiing centres, though an awareness of this was not generally

³³C. G. Stockand, "Skiing in the Canadian Rockies", Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, 1931), p. 25.

³⁴V. V. Kutschera, "Alpine Skiing in the Canadian Rockies", The British Ski Yearbook, (London: 1936), p. 252.

³⁵A. N. Carscallen, "The Coming C.A.S.A. Tournament in Banff", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935-1936), p. 49.

³⁶F. Hall, J. R. Larway, "By Snow Train to Banff", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1938-1939), p. 22.

shared by most Canadians. Banff ski interests had been active in the early development of ski jumping in the west, and in the encouragement of winter sports through sponsoring the winter carnivals. In addition, their pioneering endeavours in slalom and downhill racing, as well as ski touring and ski mountaineering, has given Banff and its skiers a place of honour in the history of Canadian sport.

IV RECREATIONAL SKIING IN THE ROCKIES

Early Skiing on Mount Norquay

It was the snowshoers who were the first to use Mount Norquay as a recreation area, according to one source.³⁷ Around 1920, three adventurous youths, Peter Whyte, Fulton Dunsmore and Cyril Paris, began skiing through Norquay Pass across to Mount Edith Cavell. A forest fire had conveniently removed much of the brush cover, and the numerous slash trails made by logging firms had left excellent trails for downhill ski runs. Others around Banff were gradually being introduced to the skiing potential of the mountain, and soon groups would regularly gather for an afternoon of what was referred to as "superb mountain skiing".³⁸ "In those days, we had to climb up the hills", emphasized Paris, "for it was the fellow who could climb the highest and ski the furthest, who was

³⁷Personal Papers, Mr. Peter Whyte, (Courtesy Mrs. Catharine Whyte), Banff, Alberta.

³⁸Statement, Cyril Paris, Personal Interview, Banff, Alberta, July 10, 1967.

usually declared the champ of the day".³⁹

Mount Norquay Ski Company Ltd.

Owen Bryant, of Boston, came to Banff in 1923 as an entomologist, intent on doing scientific research. During the summer, he became friends with several of the youngsters in the town, who told him of their winter ski experiences. An avid skier in the Eastern U.S.A., Bryant was immediately attracted to the natural ski slopes of nearby Mount Norquay. He was quick to suggest that a ski cabin should be built for the next winter season. Financed and encouraged by Bryant, a local sportsman and skier, Gus Johnson was hired to do some minor trail clearing and to "cut a ski run from the lower edge of the avalanche slope to the base of the hill where the present poma-lift stands".⁴⁰ The timber cuttings were to be brought to the base of the hill, where it was proposed the log ski cabin would be built. Unfortunately, the logs were stolen in 1924, ending the proposed ski cabin. It was not until 1928 that several members of the Banff Ski Club built the first Mt. Norquay Lodge, on the site chosen by Johnson, whose untimely death prevented him from seeing his dream realized.

Those primarily responsible for forming the Mount Norquay Ski Company Ltd. included Clifford White, Jack White,

³⁹C. Paris, "Early Skiing in Banff", (Unpublished Paper, Banff, Alberta), 1965.

⁴⁰Frontier Guide to Enchanted Banff and Lake Louise, Frontier Book, No. 10, (Frontiers Unlimited, Calgary: 1965), p. 38.

and Cyril Paris. They had, from the very beginning, advocated that "the venture would not become commercialized".⁴¹ With the establishment of a cabin on the mountain, skiing soon became popular among the local towns' people and it was reported in 1928 that skiing had come into its own in Banff.⁴² Improvements were made to the cabin, ski jumps were built and a toboggan slide constructed, which favourably complimented the natural ski trails that started and ended at the lodge.

Skoki, Sunshine, and Temple

Skiing had, by 1930, extended into the mountain country surrounding Banff, and one of the favourite areas for ski touring became the Ptarmigan Valley. It was here that Clifford White, Senior, built the first ski cabin, which was appropriately named "Skoki". It was in the fall of 1939 "that Cyril Paris and Earl Spencer" were contracted to build the first Skoki Lodge, assisted by "Victor Kutschera, Spud White, and Ike Mills".⁴³ Skoki, it is believed, became the first lodge in North America to be operated on a commercial basis primarily for skiing.⁴⁴ The opening, and subsequent ski activity around Skoki, was perhaps a modest prelude to other commercial develop-

⁴¹W. E. Round, "Mount Norquay Ski Camp", Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1928-1929), p. 76.

⁴²Frontier Guide to Enchanted Banff and Lake Louise, Frontier Book No. 10, (Frontiers Unlimited, Calgary: 1965), p. 39.

⁴³Personal Correspondence, Catharine Whyte, Banff, Alberta, December, 1968.

⁴⁴Frontier Guide to Enchanted Banff and Lake Louise, Frontier Book No. 10, (Frontiers Unlimited, Calgary: 1965), p. 39.

ments on this continent, such as Sun Valley, Idaho, the first such venture in the United States. The ski cabin at Skoki Camp was completed by the arrival of winter in 1930, and it was early that spring that the first guests arrived. Russel Bennett, of Minneapolis, was considered the first official patron of the new ski lodge, and he arrived on March 12, 1931, and spent a full week skiing and touring throughout the area. His visit was followed by the arrival of Henry S. Kingman, also of Minneapolis, who, after talking with Bennett, brought his wife and son to Skoki during the second week of April that same year.⁴⁵ The Ski Club of the Canadian Rockies Ltd. took over the operation of Skoki in 1931. Through their efforts, the facilities were extended to include a separate kitchen as well as men's and ladies' living quarters. A half-way shelter, known as the Ptarmigan Hut, was also built to ease the ski journey into the main lodge.

That winter Mr. and Mrs. Peter Whyte, of Banff, managed the lodge, which by now had become the headquarters for a wide range of ski activities. Visitors became more frequent as the news of the skiing and the hospitality spread throughout the United States and Great Britain. Articles appeared in the American, British and Australian Ski Journals, as well as in such famous club newsletters as the Seignieur and the Ski Runner in Eastern Canada. Banff and the Rocky Mountains were

⁴⁵Personal Correspondence, Catharine Whyte, Banff, Alberta, December 1968.

slowly becoming recognized as offering unequalled opportunities for high speed downhill skiing, extended ski tours and adventure-some ski climbs, all in the same area.⁴⁶ In 1933, Jim Boyce was hired to run the lodge during the summer and winter. The accommodation facilities were again extended to better serve the public and satisfy the interest people had shown in the lodge. Dr. Richard Paley, a mathematician from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, visited Skoki in 1933. Against the advice of resident mountain guides, he ventured out alone on a ski trip to Fossil Mountain on the morning of April 7. The area had been condemned for skiing, since an abnormal build-up of snow had created serious avalanche conditions. Dr. Paley failed to return to the lodge, and he became the first skiing fatality in the Canadian Rockies. His frozen body was found by a search party, buried under tons of snow at the bottom of a snowslide near Baker Lake.⁴⁷ Pioneer skiing activity in what is now the Sunshine Ski Area, culminated in 1933, when "Jim Brewster, his wife, Del, Austin Standish, Herbert Paris, and Ed Hansen, "built the first ski cabin and opened up the area commercially."⁴⁸ Near the Lake Louise ski country, a ski chalet was built on Mount Temple in 1939, and

⁴⁶Stockand, op. cit.

⁴⁷Frontier Guide to Enchanted Banff and Lake Louise, Frontier Book No. 10, (Frontiers Unlimited, Calgary: 1965), p. 39.

⁴⁸Ibid.

it opened for patrons that same year. Skiing in this area was just beginning to attract tourists, when the Second World War halted any future development.

Ski Runners of the Canadian Rockies

In 1932, an exclusive order was established that related to skiing in Canada's West and in particular, to the Rocky Mountains.⁴⁹ The Ski Runners of the Canadian Rockies organized under its founder, Mr. John Murray Gibbon of Montreal, offered membership only to those who had skied in the Rockies and could meet the stringent membership requirements. A graded membership system was instituted, distinguished by badges of bronze, silver and gold. To qualify for a club membership and the badge, one was required to have satisfied the condition of having covered a prescribed number of miles on skis in the Rocky Mountain area. The award levels were specified as "those who had registered fifty, two hundred or five hundred miles on skis in the mountains". A special "elite award" was reserved for those "who had achieved the distinction of having skied one thousand miles in the Rockies".⁵⁰ Other membership criteria embraced all phases of the sport and included similar requirements to slalom, jumping, downhill and cross country racing.

⁴⁹Stockand, op. cit., p. 25.

⁵⁰Ibid.

V SKIING AT JASPER, ALBERTA

The Jasper Ski Club, 1927

The original ski club in Jasper was apparently formed in 1927, and it immediately affiliated with the Western Branch of the Canadian Amateur Ski Association. Its existence was rather short-lived since it withdrew from the same organization in 1930 due, it appears, to a lack of interest, leadership and organization.⁵¹

Skiing in the area continued to enjoy considerable public support, though it lacked the benefit of an organized ski club. Most of the ski interests were related to alpine ski touring and ski exploration in the mountains. Until the late 1930 period, no single ski area appeared to attract the interests of local skiers and as a result, none was developed or improved to any great extent.

The Jasper Park Ski Club 1936

The Jasper Park Ski Club was founded in 1936 as a somewhat unique club in Canada. It was described as "the only cooperative ski club in the world."⁵² In this organization, fees were not paid by any of the local members. Requirements for membership were fulfilled when a resident of the Park had

⁵¹_____, "Jasper Park, A Unique Ski Club", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1937-1938), p. 21.

⁵²Ibid.

contributed a prescribed amount of work either in the clearing and improvement of ski trails or in the building of club quarters.⁵³

It was in 1937 that the club began clearing a ski hill on the north-west slope of Whistler Mountain. By the winter, a practice slalom hill of approximately two thousand feet long had been prepared. This gave local ski enthusiasts the benefits of a partially groomed ski hill within a few miles of the village. The Federal Government, through the National Park Administration, had previously agreed to lease to the club land on the mountain for the purpose of developing a ski area. By 1938 "a downhill run of over two miles had been cleared, with a vertical drop of twenty-two hundred feet."⁵⁴

Whistler Mountain 1938

The year 1938 was, according to one source, the year that "Jasper made its debut as a winter sports centre."⁵⁵ In that year membership in the club tripled, due in part to the effective leadership of their President, Mr. Fred Brewster.

The ski runs on Whistler Mountain were improved and extended in 1939, to give Jasper a downhill course of just over three miles, with a vertical drop of forty-six hundred feet.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Douglas Arbuckle, "Skiing in Central Alberta", Canada Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1939), p. 77.

⁵⁵A. Morgan, "Skiing in Jasper Park", The American Ski Annual, (Vermont: 1938-1939), p. 73.

This was, at the time, the only downhill run in Canada that could meet the stringent FIS competitive standards. It was Peter Vajda, a European ski expert residing in Jasper, who had been the technical supervisor for the Whistler Mountain project. Much of the labour had been provided by members of the Youth Training Corps of the National Forestry Program.⁵⁶ In club competition during this period, members of the Jasper Club competed annually in a closed ski tournament for the Creelman-McNichol and J. A. Wood trophies.⁵⁷

VI SKI MOUNTAINEERING IN THE WEST

Introduction

The 1930 decade witnessed the emergence of ski mountaineering in Western Canada. This development coincided with the establishment of serviced accommodation such as Skoki Lodge in Ptarmigan Valley and the winter camp of the Canadian Pacific Railway near Mount Assiniboine. Prior to this, a number of pioneer explorations, led by local skiers and mountain guides, had helped to provide the limited, yet necessary, knowledge of the areas. "Their assistance", according to Stockand, "contributed to an awareness by the public, and Government, that some of the greatest, yet undiscovered, ski country in North America was to be found in the Canadian

⁵⁶A. Morgan, "Jasper National Park", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1939), p. 75.

⁵⁷Ibid.

Rockies."⁵⁸ Accordingly, "the role of the ski" in the development of Canada's mountainous west" has been significant".⁵⁹ This general area is beyond the scope of this particular study, but a number of rather important skiing ventures will be noted since it is felt that they have contributed somewhat to the overall development of the subject.

Early Attempts 1927

Skis were used in the mountaineering exploits of Donald Munday as early as 1927. He, at that time, was concerned with exploring the mountain ranges of British Columbia. He is reported to have said "that skis were the logical equipment"⁶⁰ with which to overcome the obstacles imposed by the immense snow fields, which he encountered on his many journeys. "With skis," he remarked, "the expeditions could travel faster, over certain types of country," and as a result, "extend their climbing potential by taking advantage of any brief spell of favourable weather."⁶¹

It was during the latter nineteen-twenty period that groups of youthful and adventuresome skiers began to search the areas surrounding Banff and Jasper for new alpine ski country. The Canadian Pacific Railway established winter

⁵⁸Stockand, op. cit.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰W. A. Munday, "Ski Climbs in the Coast Range", The Canadian Alpine Journal, 1930, p. 35.

⁶¹Ibid.

quarters at their summer camp, near Mount Assiniboine, where the ski program was shared by a Norwegian ski guide, Erling Strom, from Lake Placid, and the Marquis d'egli Albizzi.⁶² To reach the Assiniboine Ski Camp it was necessary to negotiate a forty mile journey across rather hazardous mountain country. It appears that these conditions created transportation and communication problems, which eventually prevented the camp from operating successfully.⁶³

Jasper to Banff by Ski 1929

A group of youthful skiers in Jasper had for several years been interested in establishing a Canadian alpine ski resort, patterned after those that were currently popular in Europe. Their ambitious and systematic search was outlined by Kutschera, as their trips had taken them "south of the Canadian Pacific Railway...into the areas of the continental divide...Assiniboine, Sunshine and Mount Ball, the Valley of the Ten Peaks, Wenkchemma, to Ohara, and finally to the mountains of Lake Louise, and the Columbia Glacier."⁶⁴

A group, which at the time included Joe Weiss, the Jeffrey brothers, H. Burnstrom and Peter Withers, made the first successful journey over the mountains from Jasper to

⁶²Viktor Kutchera, "The Development of Skiing in Banff and in the Rockies," Canadian Ski Yearbook (Montreal: 1937-1938), p. 43.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ferris Neave, "Spring Climbs in the Canadian Rockies", The British Ski Yearbook, (London: 1932), p. 383.

Lake Louise on skis in 1929.⁶⁵ They had previously travelled extensively in the area, but this two-hundred and fifty mile journey was considered by mountaineering experts, at the time, a remarkable achievement. Even today, with the variety of technical and commercial assistance available, the trip would have been considered hazardous. This Jasper-based group treated their success in a rather unassuming way and considered their journey as more of a personal challenge, even though it has become regarded as one of the great ski expeditions in North America.⁶⁶

The First Winter Ascent on Ski

The first major mountain peak to be ascended completely on skis in Canada was the snow Dome in March, 1930. This peak, with an elevation of 11,340 feet, was successfully climbed by an expedition which included R. H. Bennett, Clifford White and J. A. Weiss. This same trio repeated the feat on Mount Collis on March 17, 1932, as part of the second successful expedition from Jasper to Lake Louise.⁶⁷

⁶⁵R. H. Bennett, "A Canadian Ski Expedition", The British Ski Yearbook, (London, 1932), p. 376.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 377.

CHAPTER IX

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKIING ON THE PRAIRIES AFTER 1900

I CAMROSE, ALBERTA

The Fram Ski Club, First on the Prairies

The Fram Ski Club of Camrose, founded in 1911, was to pioneer competitive skiing in the west.¹ Scandinavians in the community had, on several earlier occasions, come together to ski, though it was not until the fall of 1911 that they decided to form a ski club. An excerpt from the Camrose Canadian tells of the inaugural meeting:

One night late in 1911, on the 2nd of October, to be exact, six young men met to form a ski club in Camrose. They were J. R. Engelbretson, Anton and Oscar Engelbretson, Lars and Adolph Maland and Pete Mikkelson. The result was the Fram Ski Club with the following officers: Pres., J. R. Engelbretson; Vice-Pres., Anton Engelbretson; Treas., P. Mikkelson and Secretary, Lars Maland.²

The construction of a ski jump was designated as one of the club's first obligations. A suitable site had been found on the Ed Thompson farm, just south of the town, and was secured for a modest five dollar rental fee. Early in the fall of 1912 work began on the proposed forty foot wooden tower and landing hill. Construction continued through the early part of the winter until the slide was finally completed "on the

¹The Camrose Canadian, January 18, 1912, p. 1.

²The Camrose Canadian, February 9, 1937, p. 7.

night of January 5, 1912".³

Camrose Ski Tournament 1912

The new club was anxious to host its first competition, as later that same month handbills and posters appeared around the town, proclaiming; "that on January 31, 1912, a Grand Ski Tournament would be held." The announcement is recorded in the local newspaper.

Grand Ski Tournament
Under the Auspices of the
Fram Ski Club
Camrose
Wednesday, January 31st
Commencing at 2:00 p. m.
Club Slide one mile south of town
on the Coal Mine Road
Come and see the human flying
machines in action
Admission - 25¢ 4

The tournament day, to this small, western farming community was both an historic and eventful occasion. It was described as a "Great Norwegian holiday"⁵ by the present historian of the Camrose Ski Club. This was one of the first ski competitions in the province, and one of the earliest in the west, excluding the early carnivals at Rossland, B.C. Results of the competition were carried in the press under a front page headline, which read, "Skilopet Pa Onsdag Var En Stor Norsk Festdag"⁶. (The Ski Tournament on Wednesday was a Great

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Rolf T. Lund, Sr., "Short History of the Camrose Ski Club", (Unpublished Paper, 1961), Camrose, Alberta.

⁶The Camrose Canadian, February 1, 1912, p. 1.

Norwegian Festival). A picture of the scaffold and jump hill on tournament day recorded a Norwegian flag proudly decorating the top of the slide, while the Union Jack was draped in the traditional place of honour, across the front of the takeoff.

To the settlers in Central Alberta, at this time, winter provided little opportunity for sport or recreation. This somewhat new sport excited the community to such an extent that people were drawn to the town from all parts of the district to view the performance of the seven skiers who took part in this first meet. Adolph Maland won the first tournament with leaps of 69, 70 and 74 feet. Other competitors listed were Lars Maland, P. Mikkelson, Carl Sandboe, O. Engelbretson, A. Engelbretson and J. R. Engelbretson. Meet officials included Mr. C. G. Corneille as the announcer, Gilbert Hoyme as the chief judge and O. Iverson as the distance marker.⁷ Climaxing the regular competition, a spectacular twin jump was performed by Lars and Adolph Maland.

Edmonton vs. Camrose, 1912

On February 17, 1912, a second tournament was held to which representatives of the Edmonton Ski Club were invited. Ten feet had been added to the slide and jumps of over 90 feet were expected.⁸ To the delight of an estimated crowd of "over a thousand people", jumps of up to 91 feet were achieved.⁹

⁷Ibid.

⁸The Camrose Canadian, February 8, 1912, p. 4.

⁹The Camrose Canadian, February 22, 1912, p. 3.

A. M. Engelbretson of Camrose was declared the winner of the first inter-club meet, with A. Maland, second, and O. Olsen of Edmonton, third. John Haugen of Edmonton won the longest standing jump event with a leap of 87 feet.¹⁰ The jumping rules used in the meet were published and the point system used is summarized below:

One to twenty points were awarded for style or character of the jump....One point awarded for each foot of distance jumped....Thirty points were deducted for a fall....Touching with both hands counts as a fall....fifteen points deducted for touching with one hand....A tape would be used for measuring the distance of the jumps.¹¹

The National Ski Association of Western Canada 1912

During that same year, the topic of forming a Ski Association had been discussed by the Camrose Ski Club and the idea was presented to the athletes and officials at the Camrose Inter-club Tournament. Following what was the last meet of the 1912 season in Edmonton, an attempt was made to form what was referred to as the National Ski Association of Western Canada. This, it seems, was one of the first attempts by ski clubs in Canada to organize in order to standardize tournament rules and generally promote competitive skiing. This organization, founded as "The National Ski Association of Western Canada", listed its officers as; "President, Torlief Iverson, of Camrose; Secretary, Lars

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

Maland, Camrose; Treasurer, H. Floen, Edmonton; and auditors, J. Haugen and E. B. Bolseng, of Edmonton."¹² Only two Alberta clubs were active in this initial attempt at establishing a governing body for competitive skiing. The Fram Ski Club and the Edmonton Ski Club made what was to become a futile effort in 1913 to give skiing in the west an organizational structure upon which to develop. It seems their pioneering organization was somewhat premature, as it preceded the successful founding of a National Ski Association by some eight years.

The first task set for this new association was to organize and direct what was proposed as the first Western Canadian Ski Jumping Championships, which were awarded to the Fram Ski Club of Camrose. The Championships took place as planned, under the auspices of the young Western Association in February of 1913. Adolph Maland, of the host club, was declared the winner and "First Ski Jumping Champion of the West".¹³ Skiing in the years to follow continued as a popular winter sport in Camrose, due in part to the success of the first few competitions held with the Edmonton Ski Club. Many problems had first to be overcome by ski clubs on the Prairies, foremost of which was the lack of natural ski terrain. The financial basis of a prairie ski club was always questionable, and budgets had to be carefully considered each year, usually

¹²The Camrose Canadian, March 14, 1928, p. 5.

¹³Statement by Lars Maland, made to R. T. Lund, Sr., at a personal interview in Camrose, Alberta, July, 1966.

following the success or failure of the Annual Ski Tournament. Unfortunately though, for the young association, skiing in the west had not developed sufficiently to support such a sophisticated organization, and by 1917 it had been disbanded. Skiing, it seems, did not develop as quickly as had been expected, outside of the Alberta centres of Camrose, Edmonton and Banff. The Prairies were to remain isolated as far as skiing was concerned for several more years and as a result the Association found little support. These three western clubs, it appears, were not yet ready or able to enjoy the services and benefits of a formal governing body. Their efforts did, however, serve to give the competitive aspects of the sport in Edmonton and Camrose some stability and a sound basis upon which to develop.

Skiing Develops as a Sport

Skiers from Camrose and Edmonton journeyed throughout the Canadian west during these early years and frequently took part in competitions at Banff and Calgary as well as at Rossland and Revelstoke, in British Columbia. Since skiing was a completely new type of winter activity, these "ambassadors of ski jumping"¹⁴ aroused the interest of the public wherever they performed. Chris Gottaas recalled that O. Evenson and Adolph Maland were considered to be "the aces of the Camrose Club,

¹⁴Statement C. Gottaas, Camrose, Alberta, June 12, 1967, Personal Interview.

and they rarely failed to bring home championships and prizes".¹⁵ Evenson, around 1914, as far as the club records indicate, was the first man to represent the Camrose Club in cross country racing. Both he and Maland later were regular participants in these Banff Winter Carnival races. During the summer of 1919, the Fram Ski Club suffered a major setback, from which it was unable to recover. The original wooden scaffold, over the years, had fallen to disrepair and the weakened structure partially blew down in a summer wind storm. According to the local newspaper "Skiing in Camrose during the next two years was at a standstill".¹⁶ A result of this was the collapse of the original Fram Ski Club, and with it the end of a Prairie sporting tradition.

The Camrose Ski Club is Founded in 1921

Local ski interest did not return until 1921, when the remnants of the old club were brought together along with several new enthusiasts. The new club was founded as the Camrose Ski Club on February 25, 1921, and it reportedly looked to a bright future in competitive skiing.¹⁷ The first task that faced its President, P. Borud and his executive, was that of re-building the old ski jump. Through the efforts of dedicated executive members and with the assistance of public-

¹⁵The Camrose Canadian, March 14, 1928, p. 5.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

mindful citizens, a new jump was completed and ready by the winter of 1924. The Annual Ski Tournaments continued to attract large crowds who were treated to the entertaining and thrilling jumping of club veteran, Adolph Maland. He, along with cross country experts, Chris Gottaas and Jim Silver, represented Camrose in most of the major ski competitions in the west at this time.

The Scandinavians Arrive in 1925

An influx of Scandinavians to Alberta between 1925 and 1927 brought many new skiers to the Camrose area. Among them were such famous names as; J. Nordmoe, A. Albrighsen, T. Knudson, D. Nilsen, T. Jacobsen, H. Kyseth, S. Haukenstad, K. Engstad and P. Gottaas.¹⁸ In 1926, Nels Willman, one of the top ski jumpers with the Edmonton Ski Club, moved to Camrose and joined the local club. That year the Camrose Club, according to one source, "truthfully had the best skiers in the west".¹⁹ Club officials reported "that they were mildly encouraged at the recent interest in skiing which had developed among the younger boys and girls of the town".²⁰ Among the outstanding juniors of that era were the Larsen and Sjolie brothers who, along with Ray Sanders, encouraged a local as well as a national interest in competitive skiing.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Statement, Nels Willman, Camrose, Alberta, August 10, 1967, Personal Interview.

²⁰The Camrose Canadian, March 14, 1928, p. 5.

Nordmoe, Gottaas and Engstad

Jostien Nordmoe, probably one of the greatest competitors in Canada's pre-war skiing history, came to Camrose in 1925 from Norway. Since that time, he won almost every major Canadian title in the east and the west, including the Dominion Ski Championships. A perennial winner of the western championships, he began in 1927 by winning the Banff Ski Tournament and repeated the feat in 1928 and 1929. In 1928, the Jasper Ski Club originated a gruelling thirty mile cross country race, which Camrose skier, Paul Gottaas, won. He repeated this feat with decisive wins the following two years, defeating the best skiers in the west. During the latter years of the 1920 decade, Nordmoe, Engstad and Gottaas were three names that dominated western Canadian ski events; Jostien Nordmoe in the jumping and combined events, Kaare Engstad in the shorter cross country races and Paul Gottaas, the long distance cross country events.²¹

Likely the first recognition by Eastern officials of the calibre of Western Canadian competitive skiing occurred during the winter of 1929. With support from the Camrose Ski Club and considerable financial backing from businessmen in the town, Jostien Nordmoe was sent to Montreal to represent Camrose and the West at the 1929 Dominion Ski Championships. Here, he won the Canadian all-around ski championship, becoming the first Westerner to do so. At the 1930 Championships in

²¹Statement, Paul Gottaas, Sr., Camrose, Alberta, July 16, 1967. Personal Interview.

Ottawa he confirmed his supremacy by defeating the best in Canada for the second year in a row. For his contributions to the sport and in recognition of his outstanding ability, the C.A.S.A. awarded him their coveted first class gold test pin. In 1931 the Canadian Championships were held in Revelstoke, and though no eastern skiers attended, Nordmoe won the event for a record third year and earned the right to represent Canada at the 1932 Winter Olympics at Lake Placid, New York. Here he placed tenth in the Nordic Combined Event, defeating many of Europe's top performers.²² Paul Gottaas, who had up to this time, won almost every long distance race in the West, was also selected to represent Canada at the Olympics, however, due to a variety of problems, one being financial, he was unable to attend.

Local tournaments were curtailed in Camrose after 1927, when a Prairie windstorm blew their scaffold down for the second time.²³ It was not completely rebuilt until just prior to 1932, when the club hosted the Western Canadian Championship. Camrose again swept to victories in all the events, as Peter Bjornson, of the host club, won the jumping, Paul Gottaas the eleven and thirty mile cross country, and Gunnar Aasen the combined ski events.²⁴ On the strength of similar showings across the country in other meets, the annual tournament of

²²Ibid.

²³"The Camrose Ski Club Report", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1927-1928), p. 30.

²⁴The Camrose Canadian, February 9, 1937, p. 11.

1933 was anticipated to be "the best in the club's history".²⁵

The End of a Competitive Ski Era on the Prairies

The financial burdens of their success would soon restrict the efforts of the local club to expand. Businessmen of the town, who had for years financially assisted both the club and its skiers, found it increasingly difficult to meet their demands. Poor snow conditions during the 1934 and 1935 seasons also helped to curtail some of the earlier enthusiasm. Even though they were not represented in as many championship events during these years, the club gallantly reported "that it was just as strong as ever in all events".²⁶ As a tribute to the ski club, its members and the small community that supported it, The Camrose Canadian had this to say in 1937. "The people of Camrose and district can feel justly proud of the wonderful record the ski club has hung up in its quarter century of existence".²⁷ Their success was indeed partly due to the support and pride of the community with regard to its skiing tradition.

II EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Early Skiing in Edmonton

Skiing in the Edmonton area did not enjoy any great

²⁵"Club Reports", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1933), p. 79.

²⁶The Camrose Canadian, February 9, 1937, p. 11.

²⁷Ibid.

popularity until after the appearance of the Edmonton Ski Club in 1911.²⁸ The terrain surrounding the city was not ideally suited to hill skiing, but snow conditions were good and there were several areas near the city that offered excellent opportunities for ski touring and cross country. The North Saskatchewan River provided residents of the city with a wide meandering valley, suited to a wide range of recreational pursuits. It was upon the high banks of this river valley that the ski jumpers of Edmonton "enjoyed some of their first leaps through space".²⁹

The Edmonton Ski Club 1911

A group of eight Norwegians, who had learned their skiing in Norway, became interested in forming a ski club during the summer of 1911. They were particularly concerned with promoting local interest in ski jumping, which they had practiced in their homeland. On November 19, 1911, Mr. H. E. Floen, an active skier himself, was chosen as first President of the Edmonton Ski Club. Other charter members who helped to direct the affairs of the young club were "H. C. Sorenson, Hans Hougen, E. Bolseng, Olaf Olson, H. Lilleboe, O. C. Sven and John Haugen."³⁰ The club wasted little time in organizing its program, as they held their first official tournament

²⁸Personal Correspondence, John Haugen, Edmonton, Alberta, June 4, 1968.

²⁹The Edmonton Journal, January 29, 1942, p. 7.

³⁰Ibid.

early in the winter of 1911-1912. The hills at the Municipal Golf Course had been utilized for public skiing and other winter sports, and it was not long until "a snow jump appeared on a hill near 113 Street". The first informal meet, according to John Haugen, "took place on a Sunday afternoon in December", and around sixteen jumpers from Edmonton, Camrose and Entwistle took part.³¹

Club officials and ski jumpers soon expressed an interest in erecting a wooden scaffold, or artificial inrun above what they considered a suitable landing hill. Part of the structure would pass over the Connors Hill Road to a landing hill below. Skiers thought the idea was a "veritable brainwave",³² though there were some citizens who were far less enthusiastic at the prospects of skiers flying over a public thoroughfare. The proposed scaffold was nevertheless built during the summer of 1912, in spite of the expressed apprehension from some city officials.

Edmonton's First Ski Tournament 1912

The first official ski tournament in Edmonton took place on Saturday, February 24, 1912, and details were recorded in the Edmonton Bulletin. The report read; "the Edmonton Ski Club's First Annual Tournament was held on the south side of

³¹Personal Correspondence, John Haugen, Edmonton, Alberta, June 4, 1968.

³²Ibid.

the river, just east of the bridge".³³ Johnny Haugen of Edmonton was proclaimed Northern Alberta Ski Champion following the meet, as he captured first place honours with two fine jumps of eighty-four feet, for an aggregate total of 202 points. Adolph Maland and C. Sandboe of Camrose were second and third, respectively. Ski events in those days almost invariably involved a post-meet celebration as tournament day was considered a great occasion by local skiers. After the tournament it was estimated that "over a hundred people gathered at the Reid and Robinson Hall to celebrate the events of the day".³⁴ It was during this particular meet that a proposal for the formation of a National Ski Association of Western Canada was presented by the Camrose delegation to the skiers and officials from Edmonton.

Ski Competitions

The Edmonton Ski Club's second annual tournament, the following year, drew seventeen entries, who competed for prizes "valued at over \$200.00".³⁵ The Edmonton Capital reported, "several thousand people on Saturday afternoon saw John Haugen soar 109 feet for a new Canadian ski jumping record".³⁶ The jump itself presented problems to some of the

³³The Edmonton Bulletin, February 26, 1912, p. 9.

³⁴Haugen, op. cit.

³⁵The Edmonton Capital, February 22, 1913, p. 6.

³⁶The Edmonton Capital, February 24, 1913, p. 6.

competitors, notably Adolph Maland, the pride of the Fram Ski Club, who managed only a sixth place finish. The Edmonton Slide apparently did not have the usual high take-off which he was accustomed to. Judges for this meet were "H. E. Floen, S. Westvick, T. Iverson and J. E. Englebretson".³⁷ Following the meet, the skiers enjoyed supper at the Castle Hotel, where T. Everson awarded the prizes and extended an invitation for all, to attend the First National Ski Tournament of Western Canada, scheduled to take place in Camrose, hosted by the Fram Ski Club the following week.

Hopes of breaking the existing jumping record in 1914 were bolstered by improvements made to the jump in November of 1913. The Nob Hill Slide, as it was often referred to on the Cameron Hill Road, was damaged during a windstorm and was partially rebuilt. The new structure, it was reported, "would give more speed than the old jump" as the scaffold rose about 85 feet above the takeoff, and speeds of forty-five miles per hour at takeoff were expected."³⁸

True to predictions, the apparent world's record fell to none other than John Haugen, with a record jump of 112 feet. Five thousand people witnessed the exhibition of ski jumping, as seventeen competitors took part. The skiers came from Entwistle and Kingman, as well as Camrose. Through the courtesy of Mayor McNamara, the City of Edmonton Band was in attendance

³⁷The Edmonton Capital, February 29, 1913, p. 9.

³⁸The Edmonton Capital, February 27, 1914, p. 8.

and their entertaining performance was reported to have "cast a pleasing air of enjoyment over the entire competition".⁴⁰

The Ladies, Juniors and Recreational Skiing

In several prairie centres women's events, sometimes referred to as downhill races, were in fact straight ski runs down the landing hill of the ski jump. Competitors were often judged on style alone, or on other technique and time combinations. In Alberta, after 1913, such events were often the featured prelude to the men's ski jumping tournaments. According to Nels Willman, the event in Edmonton in 1913 "was a judged exhibition of style in negotiating the steep landing hill". His sister was one of the participants in this trial event, "and at the time", he pointed out, "it was considered quite a feat for the ladies".⁴¹

One of the features of the ski jumping meet in 1914 was to be the first public demonstration in the city by a lady skier. "The tournament will be opened", said The Edmonton Capital, "by a lady skier, skiing down the lower hill".⁴² The interest of ladies in the sport, on the prairies, had for the most part been limited to spectator support at jumping tournaments. This, it seems, was an attempt by local officials to attract more women to the sport of skiing. The

³⁹The Edmonton Capital, March 2, 1914, p. 5.

⁴⁰The Edmonton Bulletin, March 2, 1914, p. 6.

⁴¹Statement, Nels Willman, Camrose, Alberta, July 1967, Personal Interview.

⁴²The Edmonton Capital, February 27, 1914, p. 9.

Edmonton Ski Club soon began to realize a need for extending their facilities to men, women and children, and not just to the competitive ski jumpers. The jumping exhibitions had certainly attracted people to the ski hills, but it was felt something more had to be offered by ski clubs in order to keep them there. It seems the thrill of sliding down a high wooden scaffold, in order to leap one hundred feet to a steep hill below, was not the type of recreation sought by the average prairie citizen.⁴³

Citizens of Edmonton were urged by the local ski club to take full advantage of the numerous physical and social benefits which they claimed were inherent in the sport. According to one club official, "skiing was one of the finest sports in the world, since it united the joys of snowshoeing and tobogganing and developed strength, courage and self-confidence".⁴⁴ This appears to be one of the first attempts by a ski club in the west to expand the sport beyond that of competitive ski jumping and cross country skiing. The Edmonton Club felt that the advantages of ski touring and recreational hill skiing must somehow be emphasized in their program. A number of individuals in the club were attempting to promote this aspect, though in the end it was the ski jumpers who garnered most of the support and publicity. It

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

was generally recognized that, for such a program to succeed, an extensive program of ski instruction would be necessary. The Montreal Ski Club had corresponded with Edmonton Ski Club officials in an effort to encourage this and other aspects of recreational skiing, which were becoming exceedingly popular in Eastern Canada.⁴⁵

John Haugen, Ski Champion, 1915-1920

On tournament day, Saturday, February 6, 1915, John Haugen, the locally proclaimed champion, again broke the existing record by ten feet.⁴⁶ It was reported that "The Canadian champion fulfilled promises by making a beautiful jump of 122 feet before a crowd of five thousand".⁴⁷ This was a big year in Edmonton for the sport of skiing, as the tournament had grown to include several special events. Lady skiers again appeared in the person of Miss Inga Sandboe and Miss Godrum Willman, who confined their efforts to negotiating the landing hill. However, they demonstrated enough dexterity to convince most of the ladies in the crowd that men, in the future, would not continue to enjoy a monopoly of skiing.⁴⁸

The boys' event, held for the first time, drew thirty-one contestants, indicating the growing popularity of the sport

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶The Edmonton Bulletin, February 8, 1915, p. 7.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

among the youth in the city. A short three years earlier, skiing in Edmonton was practically an unknown sport to the general public. The Class A Boys Division was won by P. Douglas, whose longest jump was thirty feet, and Class B by Robert Harrison, with twenty-four feet.⁴⁹ The highlight of this meet was the much publicized twin jump by J. Haugen and Nels Willman. In this performance, both skiers skied down the inrun side by side and, in unison, jumped from the takeoff and landed together again side by side. The crowd was so enthused that the twin jump later became a part of almost every tournament held in the city.⁵⁰

By 1920 the ski tournaments had become established and attracted skiers from all over Western Canada. Anders Haugen, a Norwegian-American, considered to have been the world's professional champion at the time, was scheduled to compete in the 1920 event, along with Canadian champion, Nels Nelson of Revelstoke.⁵¹ Haugen had just set a new Canadian record of two hundred feet on the large Revelstoke hill and, along with several other U.S. professional jumpers, was on a Western Canadian tour, staging ski jump demonstrations. The tournament pitted local hero, John Haugen, with the professional ace, Anders Haugen, and local interest ran high. The results

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Statement, Nels Willman, Camrose, Alberta, June 1967, Personal Interview.

⁵¹ Statement, Chris Gottaas, Camrose, Alberta, June 1967, Personal Interview.

indicated "that John Haugen," the local champion, "had enjoyed an easy margin to win on style, although Anders Haugen", the world's champion, "out-jumped him by eight feet".⁵²

Ski Interest Dwindles 1925 and Returns 1937

Interest in skiing continued to develop as long as ski jumping as a sport flourished. The other ski disciplines on the Prairies were still very dependent on ski jumping for support. However, in 1925, the wooden scaffold was found to be unsafe and was demolished. This was a blow to local ski jumping enthusiasts and one that would adversely affect skiing in the city for several years. "After dismantling the scaffold in 1926",⁵³ skiers shifted their activity to different hills around the city. These were dark years for local skiers and it was not until 1936, when a new scaffold was erected on the Connors hill site, that skiing began a slow revival. At the same time plans were laid for the expansion of the club's ski activity to include slalom, downhill and other forms of recreational hill skiing.

It was around this time that local skiing began to shift towards the Canadian Rockies. The inauguration of a regular ski train to Jasper in 1937 did much to promote hill skiing and maintain ski touring as a recreational pastime.⁵⁴

⁵²The Edmonton Journal, January 29, 1942, p. 7.

⁵³Personal Correspondence, J. Haugen, Edmonton, Alberta, June 1968.

⁵⁴The Edmonton Journal, March 29, 1942, p. 7.

Along with this, support for hill skiing began to develop at the Edmonton Ski Club. In addition to encouraging this aspect in the city, they also became active in promoting skiing in the Rockies. The appearance of a second club in the city, along with these other factors, coincided with the gradual return of ski interest to Northern and Central Alberta during the 1930 decade.

The Eskimo Ski Club

The Eskimo Ski Club appeared on the scene in 1932 and flourished during these years, due to the inactivity of the old Edmonton Ski Club. Its popular ski site, opposite White Mud Creek on the north bank of the Saskatchewan River, offered opportunities for all forms of skiing and outdoor activity. The club began through the efforts of a "handful of Scandinavians, who had a desire to continue the sport they loved in their homeland".⁵⁵ Harold Fremmerlid was elected the club's first president, with Hans Kysetu and Reidar Torp as vice president and secretary. Though membership in the first year consisted of not more than "a dozen hardy souls", they have been credited with initiating what was to become "a revival of ski interest in the city".⁵⁶ In 1933, with much enthusiasm, they proceeded to erect a ski jump on Varsity Hill near the university on the south bank of the river. Here, they held

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

several successful jumping competitions. In 1937 the club's activity had been extended the year around, with the inclusion of summer outdoor sports. Canoeing emerged as the most popular and in the years that followed, membership grew and facilities were expanded. The "colourful, blue sweaters, with orange trim" became known far and wide in the west as those of the "Eskimo Ski Club".⁵⁷ Many honours were to be brought to this club by its athletes in competitions throughout the west.

IV SKIING IN SASKATCHEWAN

Early Attempts

Around 1920 snowshoes, rather than skis, appeared to be the most popular and practical means of oversnow travel in Saskatchewan, and it was not until after 1930 that skis were used to any great extent. Soon after, however, interest in skiing as a sport was quick to develop. According to one source, most of the skiing in Saskatchewan began through the efforts of "transplanted Scandinavians, who were primarily interested in cross country and jumping".⁵⁸ Alpine or hill skiing was virtually unknown to prairie skiers until around 1935, and it did not become popular until after 1950.⁵⁹

In speaking about the early skiing in the Saskatoon area, Trygve Strand recalled, "It was around 1928 when local

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Personal Correspondence, Trygve Strand, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, November 1968.

⁵⁹Ibid.

sports interest shifted towards skiing".⁶⁰ It appears that the "Saskatoon Ski Club, founded in 1928",⁶¹ was the first organized ski club in the province. Clubs were soon formed in other nearby areas, with the Prince Albert Ski Club likely the next to formally organize during the fall of 1932.⁶² According to one source, the competitive rivalry at this time between prairie ski clubs was strong, "particularly between Prince Albert and Saskatoon".⁶³ As the sport became established, competitive exchanges between these two centres became more frequent. Membership in most prairie ski clubs remained small, and tended to fluctuate each year, depending on local snow and weather conditions. Accordingly, reports of ski activity at this time indicate that the sport was practiced rather extensively by relatively few ski enthusiasts.

The Saskatoon Ski Club 1928

The Saskatoon Ski Club, founded in 1928, was to become one of the leading ski clubs in Saskatchewan. John T. Cooper, a local hardware merchant, was elected the club's first president and he was assisted by a hard working executive committee, consisting of Mrs. Olive Hanley and Messrs. Woods, Galloway,

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Personal correspondence, Ken Galloway, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, September 1967.

⁶³Personal correspondence, Arthur Johnson, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, August 1968.

Mills and Harris.⁶⁴ As with most clubs on the prairies, one of the first problems facing the organization was the creation and development of a suitable ski area. The executive immediately entered negotiations with the University of Saskatchewan for the use of a hill located on university property. Finally, in January of 1929, the university's president granted the Saskatoon Club permission to erect a "ski slide, on the big hill near Varsity".⁶⁵ Club membership during that first year of operation, totalled no more than fifteen, which somewhat limited plans for the development of skiing in the area. The ski program, at the time, consisted of informal weekend outings to the Varsity Hill, and ski hikes, some of which extended as far out "as the hills of Moon Lake..."⁶⁶

The Varsity ski area became affectionately referred to as "Devil's Dip",⁶⁷ and it was not long until a snow jump appeared and ski jumping became a regular pastime. During the summer of 1929, under the direction of Newton Lawson and Doug Worcester, club members erected a small scaffold, which rose high above the crest of the river hill. It was hoped that jumps of at least fifty or sixty feet would be possible. On January 18, 1930, it was reported "that the Saskatoon Ski

⁶⁴Saskatoon Star Phoenix, January 18, 1929, p. 8.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Strand, op. cit.

⁶⁷Ibid.

Club would open its new slide at Devil's Dip on Sunday at 2:30 p.m."⁶⁸ Following the successful opening, the club held its first annual championship on March 2, 1930. There appears to be no records listing the official results of that meet, although it was recalled that "Alf Rogstead", a pre-meet favourite, "had the longest standing jump".⁶⁹ A special feature was to be an exhibition twin jump in which the team of "Dave Woods and Bill Batters" had challenged "George Hays and Frank Harris"⁷⁰ to a competition.

Late that same year, a ski jumping accident on the hill resulted in a broken leg, and university authorities refused the use of the area for future jumping. A second jump site was then located less than a mile north of Devil's Dip. Use of this property was obtained from the city for a nominal rental fee of one dollar per year. The entire autumn of 1930 was spent building a suitable jump tower and grooming the landing hill, and by mid-November the final touches to the takeoff were completed. Unfortunately, strong prairie winds and poor snow conditions hampered efforts of the club for a couple of years, but by 1932 membership in the Saskatoon Club had grown to forty-five. Encouraged by this increased membership, the executive proposed hosting a championship tournament during the 1932 season.

⁶⁸The Saskatoon Star Phoenix, January 18, 1929, p. 81

⁶⁹Strand, op. cit.

⁷⁰Saskatoon Star Phoenix, March 1, 1930, p. 6.

Provincial Ski Championships, 1932

On February 29, 1932, the first Provincial Ski Championships were held, with ski jumping listed as the main attraction. However, a second event, referred to as a two mile cross country challenge race between snowshoers and cross country skiers, had aroused considerable interest. It was reported that the local snowshoe club would field a strong team in an effort to convince skeptics of the supremacy of the snowshoe over the ski.⁷¹ The snowshoers entered a team of prominent snowshoe men, including "Wright, Elliott, Hartley and Edwards", and emerged as pre-meet favourites. The skiers, in turn, were depending on the ability of "Wallace, Cooper, and the Saskatoon flash, Jack Wahlberg".⁷² Again, no results were reported and it was rumored that the challenge event was not completed to the complete satisfaction of the officials and both the results were therefore not announced. A downhill ski test and numerous novelty races concluded the afternoon program. According to one observer, "It was a big day in Saskatoon ski history".⁷³

A Prairie Ski Experience 1934

What may be a typical example of the extent of prairie skiing during this period can be seen from an experience of

⁷¹Saskatoon Star Phoenix, February 29, 1932, p. 5.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Strand, op. cit.

ski pioneer, Ernest Coldevin of Welden, Saskatchewan. Arriving in Canada from Norway in 1930, he, like most Scandinavians, brought with him a love of winter and an interest in the sport of skiing. Unfortunately, few of the newly-arrived Scandinavians had brought their skis to Canada. This fact, plus the unavailability of adequate equipment, had somewhat hampered the early development of the sport on the prairies. In speaking of these years, Coldevin points out "It was real hard times here, so it wasn't easy to get a pair of skis".⁷⁴ After some difficulty he was able to obtain a suitable pair and, in 1934, he relates, "I travelled on ski from Welden to Prince Albert, which is a good forty-five miles, and took part in a ski tournament".⁷⁵

Douglas Worcester - Prairie Ski Pioneer

In 1932 Doug Worcester was elected President of the Saskatoon Ski Club and he spearheaded the club through a crucial period of prairie history, referred to locally as the "dry and windy thirties".⁷⁶ Worcester, a remarkable character, guided Saskatoon ski interests from the president's chair for an unprecedented thirty years. Among the many achievements made during his term, the construction of a heated ski cabin was perhaps the most notable. In competitive skiing, his

⁷⁴Personal Correspondence, Ernest Coldevin, Welden, Saskatchewan, August, 1967.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Strand, op. cit.

interests earned him the reputation of being one of the most knowledgable ski authorities in the West.⁷⁷ It was on May 24, 1936, that the Saskatoon Club sponsored a working bee to reconstruct the lower part of the jump scaffold and move the structure further back from the existing landing hill. This effort was again successfully directed by Newt Lawson, and the scaffold height was extended to eighty-three feet. "This really brought a challenge to our ski jumpers", recalls Strand, and put Saskatoon facilities "on par with the best in the prairie provinces".⁷⁸ It was on January 8, 1939, that 1,500 spectators turned out to watch the opening tournament on the new, extended scaffold. That day, young Jack Dixon, a skier from Revelstoke, B.C., attending university in Saskatoon, won the meet and set a hill record of 104 feet.⁷⁹

V SKIING IN MANITOBA

Early Skiing at the Turn of the Century

It is believed that the first skiing in Manitoba took place around the turn of the century. These infrequent occurrences were isolated and markedly individual in nature. According to A. A. McCoubrey, Scandinavians in Manitoba were known to have practiced the sport prior to 1900. This, he suggests, "was primarily a result of their persistence of habit,

⁷⁷Johnson, op. cit.

⁷⁸Strand, op. cit.

⁷⁹Ibid.

since skiing was considered a way of life to most of them".⁸⁰
 Some of the early Norse settlers in Manitoba are reported to have fashioned skis which they patterned after those common to their homeland. It is with these, crude, home-made skis "that the early pioneers first glided over the snows of the prairie".⁸¹

The Winnipeg Ski Club 1911

In 1900, the area surrounding the city of Winnipeg offered little to the interested skier. Flat prairie landscape, combined with an extreme winter climate, were nevertheless not insurmountable problems to early Canadian sportsmen. For McCoubrey skiing began in 1908, when he was persuaded to "invest in a pair of skis and a couple of textbooks".⁸² Lacking both knowledge and experience, he began, along with his companion, George D'Armandaritz, to explore the countryside for a suitable practice area. They found themselves limited to the nearby banks of the Assiniboine and Red River, and it was here that skiing in Winnipeg began. Out of the friendly association, which developed among those who frequented the river bank hills, grew the idea of a ski club. It was from this nucleus that the Winnipeg Ski Club was founded during winter of 1911.⁸³ As was the case with many clubs formed in

⁸⁰ A. A. McCoubrey, "Skiing in Manitoba", Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1935-1936), p. 107.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

the west, the Winnipeg organization faced the future with a degree of uncertainty. Skiing was not an activity ideally suited to either the climate or the countryside, as forty miles to the east lay the exposed pre-cambrian rock, while sixty miles to the west was the Manitoba escarpment, with an elevation of only five hundred feet. Neither of these geographic features offered any great encouragement to the skier.

Until 1915 the club was fortunate to enjoy the influx of a number of Scandinavian settlers, most of whom were eager to join the ski club. It was about this time that a second club, the Norge Ski Club, appeared in Winnipeg. It was primarily interested in competitive skiing and soon attracted most of the experienced ski jumpers and cross country racers. In 1920 the smaller club merged with the Winnipeg Ski Club and brought together the best interests of both groups.⁸⁴

Post War Skiing 1920

Skiing in the west passed through a short phase when public interest in jumping declined. This, interestingly enough, preceded the introduction of hill skiing along with slalom and downhill competitions, ski tows and groomed ski hills. When these innovations arrived, skiing on the prairies became a sport with a recreational and social basis, and consequently began to grow. Ski jumping in Winnipeg reached a post-war peak about 1923, when The Winnipeg Free Press Evening

⁸⁴"The Winnipeg Ski Club", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1936), p. 107.

Bulletin carried this headline: "Hundreds Watch Ski Jumping Tourney".⁸⁵ It was reported that over two thousand people watched that tournament, hosted by the Winnipeg Ski Club on the River Park Hill. Emil Solbert won the men's jumping event as he jumped eighty-three feet, while Bob Hinton took the longest standing jump competition with eighty feet. Tommy Smart was declared winner of the boys' class, with a jump of thirty-six feet.⁸⁶

One of the top competitive skiers in the West, after the First World War, was Nils Jorstad. He first represented the small Norge Ski Club and, when it left the scene, he joined the older Winnipeg Club. Being skilled at both ski jumping and cross country, he won many honours throughout the West in the 1920 period, and was a frequent competitor in most of the major tournaments in British Columbia and Alberta.

Hill Skiing in Manitoba, 1930

The Winnipeg Ski Club joined the C.A.S.A. in 1932, at a time when interest in skiing was considered to be, "at an all time low".⁸⁷ The club's efforts were divided between the operation of two ski jumps, as well as the usual division

⁸⁵The Winnipeg Free Press Evening Bulletin, January 29, 1923, p. 3.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷"The Winnipeg Ski Club", Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal, 1932), p. 51.

between competitors and pleasure skiers. It appeared that in essence two ski clubs still existed, as the competitive strength remained with those members of the old Norge Ski Club. Also contributing to the situation were financial problems that continued to plague club officials. It was reported in 1932, a year made famous for its lack of snow, that the club netted a profit of only forty cents from hosting two jumping meets.⁸⁸ Ski hikes and winter picnics were popular pastimes, but again skiers were restricted to the nearby riverbanks, which soon lost their appeal.

Slalom racing was a somewhat unique event in most parts of the prairies at this time. Nevertheless, in 1932, it was practiced rather extensively by members of the Winnipeg Ski Club. One of the supporters of this aspect was the club President, Major H. Westmorland. He was responsible for organizing regular slalom competitions on the steep river banks, in spite of the obvious inadequacy of the hills. One of these events was described in the club's annual report to the C.A.S.A. as "consisting of two runs over each of three short courses".⁸⁹

On March 3, 1932, A. A. McCoubrey, Roger Neave, Ferris Neave and Campbell Secord, made a trip to the Rocky Mountains in order to do some ski mountaineering. On that expedition they made what became the first ski ascents of four Canadian Mountain Peaks over ten thousand feet, as "Mount Collie, Gordon,

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 64.

Olive and Vice President were conquered".⁹⁰

Skiing is Established in Manitoba, 1936

By 1936 the Winnipeg club had overcome its earlier problems and had adjusted to the more recent developments and soon became established as one of the major ski organizations on the prairies. Their headquarters had been moved to a new clubhouse, and ski trains to the La Riviere ski country, one hundred and twelve miles to the southwest, became a regular feature on winter weekends. Manitobans proudly claim that they inaugurated the first ski train in Western Canada, from Winnipeg to La Riviere, on February 3, 1935".⁹¹ The Winnipeg Ski Club, it seems, enjoyed success by locating their ski organization in Winnipeg, and concentrating their ski activity at more favourable sites away from the city. La Riviere, by 1938, enjoyed the benefits of several well groomed hills, ski lifts and a thirty-five metre ski jump. Several seasons of good snow resulted in club membership going well beyond the three hundred mark.

Following the La Riviere venture, other ski developments appeared near the centres of Minnedosa and Neepawa, and the skiing prospects appeared bright for Manitoba. A ski club was reported to have been formed at Brandon as early as 1935, with Mr. Howard Masson as President. They had, in a short time,

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 65.

⁹¹D. Batchelor, et. al., "Skiing in Canada," Canadian Geographical Journal, Vol. 14, No. 2, February 1937, p. 70.

groomed a ski hill, developed a network of ski trails and erected a clubhouse, all in readiness to welcome a large and active membership.⁹²

By 1940, the frequent appearance of the Winnipeg Ski Club in the list of championship winners adequately reflected the sporting interest and growth of the club. With a membership of over six hundred, and leadership from men such as "Joe O'Brien and H. Cotterell", the club enjoyed a well-organized and well-balanced program during the latter half of the 1930 decade. Ski instructional classes were being conducted five nights a week by Howie Masson and his exclusive corps of instructors, who reportedly handled "over three hundred students in 1939".⁹³ Work such as this, brought more people out to the ski hills and increased interest in the sport. The over-all standard of skiing throughout the province in 1940 reflected the rather excellent program which was offered through the Winnipeg Ski Club.⁹⁴

⁹²"The Winnipeg Ski Club," Canadian Ski Year Book, (Montreal: 1935), p. 62.

⁹³Winnipeg Ski Club Reports, Canadian Ski Year Book, (Montreal: 1939), p. 160.

⁹⁴Ibid.

CHAPTER X

THE BASIS OF ORGANIZED SKIING IN CANADA

I THE CANADIAN AMATEUR SKI ASSOCIATION

The C.A.S.A. is Founded in 1920

By 1920, the need for a national governing body to control the developing sport of skiing had been a topic of discussion for several years. In Eastern Canada, competitive skiing had developed to such an extent that an organizational structure seemed necessary to ensure that the continued growth would be in the best interests of the sport. Many problems confronted skiers and ski clubs, and they appeared somewhat difficult to resolve, without the assistance of a national authority. The situation was such that, in 1920, representatives of the major ski clubs in Eastern Canada agreed to meet in Montreal, following the Quebec Open Ski Tournament. Primarily through the efforts of Mr. H. P. Douglas, a dinner meeting was held on February 28, 1920, in the new clubhouse of the Montreal Ski Club. It was here that Eastern ski officials first met to consider the feasibility of forming a National Association of ski clubs, and to discuss the mutually shared problems related to the future of Canadian skiing.

At this meeting, a formal proposal was presented by the host club, suggesting the formation of a National Ski Association. Reflecting upon that event several years later, Douglas said, "it was the most important happening of my long

ski life".¹ Present at that historic meeting were many great sportsmen, who had pioneered Canadian skiing and who now were establishing the basis of skiing as an organized sport. Representing the Ottawa Ski Club were C. E. Mortureux, Sigurd Lockeberg and Joe Morin, while Ted Devlin and G. Graham attended on behalf of the Cliffside Ski Club. F. W. Russel was reported to have been the only member of the Quebec City Ski Club present, while the Montreal Ski Club was represented by a large contingent, which included "Messrs. Douglas, Tollefsen, Wendt, Harlow, Dunn, St. Pierre, Whittall, Pickering, Kerr, Moore, Mitchell, the Drummonds and the MacKinnons."²

Since the idea of a federation of ski clubs in Canada had been a widely discussed topic, the proposal was favourably accepted by the group. Among the more pertinent problems that confronted ski clubs, and the sport in general, was the one related to the existing concept of amateurism. Qualifications and definitions then, as now, proved to be indefinite and unsatisfactory. Professionalism had crept into North American skiing and was especially prevalent among the ski jumpers. Professional tours, ski contests and ski exhibitions were becoming more and more popular in the U.S.A. and in parts of Western Canada. It was apparent that a uniform classification system for ski competitors was urgently needed if young

¹H. P. Douglas, "Canadian Skiing", Skiing the International Sport, R. Palmedo, ed. (The Derrydale Press, New York: 1937), p. 307.

²H. P. Douglas, My Skiing Years, (Montreal: Whitcombe and Gilmour Ltd., 1951), p. 34.

Canadian ski talent was to develop in a truly amateur setting. A second major problem cited was the lack of cooperation among ski clubs in the selection and allocation of tournament sites and dates. Since there were not enough competitors at this time to satisfy two or three senior meets on the same day, many bitter inter-club disputes resulted from conflicts in this area. It became apparent that a system would have to be devised for improving the scheduling of tournament dates and for the sanctioning of championship meets. "With the rapid growth of the sport", reported Douglas, "the time had come for organized control".³

Throughout the discussions held that evening, it was generally agreed that a national governing body for the sport should be established. It had also been suggested that a constitution be drafted, similar to, and somewhat modelled after, the one used by the National Ski Association of America. A draft outline of a proposed constitution was presented to the meeting for consideration. Following a lengthy discussion and numerous modifications the document, as amended, was unanimously accepted by those present.⁴ That the constitutional guidelines for the new association were debated at such great length, could perhaps be explained by the expressed desire of the group to adapt and structure the document to deal with the conditions

³Douglas, "Canadian Skiing", op. cit., p. 310.

⁴Douglas, My Skiing Years, op. cit., p. 36.

that existed in Canada. If the organization was to succeed, it would have to account for, and deal with, the many problems that were unique to this country. A concern was expressed that the constitution should be designed so as to help in solving some of these problems, and contribute to the future development of the sport. With the acceptance of the constitution by those present, the Canadian Ski Association was formed, and in the words of its founder "was, thus launched, upon its long and successful career".⁵

The First Meeting of the C.A.S.A. - February 19, 1921

The first annual meeting of the newly-formed ski organization was called for 10:30 a.m. in Room 1100 of the Windsor Hotel in Montreal on Saturday, February 19, 1921. At this meeting H. Percy Douglas was elected President, a post which he held for an unprecedented ten years. For the C.A.S.A., these early years were characterized by slow, but nevertheless steady growth, as it dealt with a host of crucial issues and problems. Only four founding clubs were brought into the organization, which initially included "The Montreal, Ottawa, Cliffside and Quebec Ski Clubs".⁶ Annual meetings of the Association were to be held each year, and in most cases would coincide with the Dominion Ski Tournament. Membership fees in the association were set at fifteen dollars for each club, and this was designed to cover only the basic administrative

⁵Ibid.

⁶Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of the First Annual Meeting, Montreal, February 19, 1921 (C.A.S.A. Historical Records), p. 4.

costs. It was agreed that the office of Secretary-Treasurer would be an appointed position determined by the President at the annual meeting. Whenever feasible, a member of the club, hosting the Dominion Ski Tournament, would be elected to the executive for that year. This individual would then be in a position to supervise the financial transactions, as the Association's main task at this time appeared to be the operation and conduct of the Dominion Ski Championships. This event was also the main source of revenue for the Association since a guarantee of fifty dollars, in addition to ten per cent of the gross tournament profits were to be turned over to the Association by the host club.

Much of the business and discussion at the first few meetings of the young association were concerned with the questions of amateurism, the classification of competitors and the organization of ski tournaments. Many of these problems seemed to be of a somewhat urgent nature, as they usually pertained to situations related directly to the ski tournament of that year. Several technical matters were brought forward at the first meeting, but they were concerned primarily with specific rules for the competitive ski events. The scoring procedures that were to be used were re-defined and included in the official association minutes.⁷

⁷Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of the Fourth Annual Meeting, Ottawa, February 23, 1924, (Montreal: C.A.S.A. Historical Records), p. 34.

These technical problems became increasingly difficult to deal with at the annual meetings and this situation finally resulted in the formation of a Technical Ski Board in 1924.⁸ At the fourth annual meeting, Chris Tollefsen, Sigurd Lockenberg, and H. Elliott were appointed to the proposed board. Their principal task was to deal with all matters relating to the conduct of competitive ski events and to recommend changes in the rules of competition.⁹

The Canadian Amateur Ski Association was confronted with numerous problems during the first decade of its existence. However, by systematic consideration, followed by intelligent and decisive action, each was dealt with, usually to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. As a result, the youthful governing body gradually came to exert its authority over the sport, at least in Eastern Canada. They realized that many of the issues and their eventual resolution depended on the cooperation of all ski clubs in Canada. If they were to be successful in their endeavours, they would eventually have to enlist the support of the strong competitive and rather independent ski clubs in the West. As the Association grew, the influence of its Technical Board began to express a desire for a more standardized rule system, related to competitive skiing. This, plus the fear that eastern-based interests would dominate western skiing, resulted in resistance by the West to

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

any constructive move by the C.A.S.A. If the Association was to encourage the development of skiing on a national scale, this resentment would have to be overcome. This existing situation brought years of strife to development of organized skiing in Canada.

II THE EAST-WEST CONFLICT IN ORGANIZED SKIING 1920-1935

Western Concern

Organized skiing in Western Canada developed more or less separately from any influence of eastern Canadian clubs or the C.A.S.A. until the mid 1920's. By that time the Association had developed sufficient strength and support to suppress efforts of several western clubs, who wished to form a second Ski Association based in the West. Fortunately, men such as H. P. Douglas and W. B. Thompson in the east, and Kennington Hague, Nels Nelson and Rudolph Verne in the west, were able to recognize the importance for Canada of a single unified ski association. These men, in their efforts, held foremost, it seems, the interests of Canadian skiing, rather than any personal gain or regional recognition.

Following the formation of the C.A.S.A. in Montreal in 1920, clubs in Western Canada began to organize in order to protect their vested interests in the sport, and prevent what they feared as domination by the more powerful and already established C.A.S.A. The West, as well, had its own internal problems to contend with, as existing ski clubs were widely

dispersed and spread across prairies and mountain ranges from Winnipeg to Vancouver. Ski Club development here had taken place on a regional basis, centred around geographical areas such as Winnipeg, Central Alberta, the Rocky Mountains, Central British Columbia, and the Pacific Coast. Communication and club interaction was limited, though at major contests most clubs were well represented. As a result, exchanges of ideas or unified efforts to organize met with only limited success. During this period, the more powerful ski regions in British Columbia tended to dominate western ski interests and to communicate their views to the now well established C.A.S.A. in the East. In addition, the ever present danger of the sport developing a north-south orientation was always present. Exchanges between western clubs and those of the north-west regions of the United States had, over the years, become increasingly popular. Such developments were regarded by the C.A.S.A. as a threat to the continued development of a truly Canadian Ski Association.¹⁰

Western Canadian Affiliation 1923

The C.A.S.A. turned its attention to Western Canada around 1923, when the question of forming a Western Division was first introduced at the annual meeting.¹¹ This matter was

¹⁰Canadian Ski Association, Minutes of the Third Annual Meeting, Montreal, February 24, 1923, (Montreal: C.A.S.A., Historical Records), p. 20.

¹¹Ibid.

discussed in some detail, and what began as a simple question was to eventually lead to many years of dispute and negotiation between the rival ski organizations. Realizing that Western interests would have to be brought into the organization if it was to be considered national and representative of Canada, the C.A.S.A. became concerned over recent developments in the west. Amateurism in Canadian competitive skiing, especially in the West, had been under question, and this was somewhat related to the reluctance of the C.A.S.A. to join the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada. A letter was drafted by the C.A.S.A. and directed to all the known ski clubs in Canada advising them that their membership would be entertained, provided they were willing to accept the current constitution and by-laws of the Canadian Amateur Ski Association. The letter stressed the importance of all clubs adhering to existing amateur regulations, and that these would be strictly enforced. The amateur standing of Nels Nelson of Revelstoke was, at the time, under review, and this issue brought to the surface a point of contention between the two groups.¹² The western clubs felt that they could not accept a constitution in which they had taken no part in drafting, as well as by-laws which did not consider existing circumstances in the West. These prevailing conditions were not acceptable to western clubs and, in 1923, organized skiing in Canada began the rather painful task of resolving these differences.

¹²Ibid., p. 21.

By the 1924 annual meeting, no satisfactory replies had been received from any of the Western clubs in response to the proposal for forming a Western Ski Division. The C.A.S.A. presiding president was again instructed to write personally to the clubs in the West and to outline the amateur regulations governing ski competitions and specifically those rules concerned with "the handling of expense money".¹³ These inquiries, it seems, created only a marginal interest among Western ski clubs as responses were received from only Vancouver and Revelstoke.

Western Amateur Ski Association is Proposed 1927

By 1927, ski clubs in Western Canada were beginning to indicate what appeared to be a more genuine interest in the Eastern-based Canadian Amateur Ski Association. This likely resulted from the Association's recent affiliation with the F.I.S. and the subsequent recognition of the C.A.S.A. as the sole governing body of Canadian amateur skiing. Mr. R. J. Verne of Vancouver had, for some time, been working diligently in organizing the widely-dispersed clubs in the West in order to bring about the formation of a Western branch of the C.A.S.A. Much resistance to this idea was found to exist in Alberta and in the interior of British Columbia, as they still feared domination by the larger and more influential clubs in the east. These clubs were, for the most part, isolated and autonomous in

¹³C.A.S.A. Minutes, Fourth Annual Meeting, Ottawa, February 23, 1924, (Montreal: C.A.S.A. Historical Records), p.22.

directing the ski affairs in their area, and were reluctant to have this authority threatened.

Several meetings were held in 1927 presided over by Verne, who had by now, gathered the support of the Vancouver clubs and the Omineca Club at Burns Lake, B.C. At a meeting held in Banff in the spring of that year, this loosely organized Western Amateur Ski Association had officially enlisted the support of the Hollyburn Pacific, Omineca, Revelstoke and Banff Ski Clubs. At this meeting they voted unanimously in favour of a closer liaison between Eastern and Western ski organizations. The Camrose Ski Club in Central Alberta, one of the strongest competitive clubs in Canada at that time, indicated a negative interest in the venture. This resistance was in part due to a suspicion that Western ski power would then be vested in the clubs on the West Coast, for whom R. J. Verne was the spokesman. In any case, the reluctance of the influential Camrose Club and others, was sufficient to prevent any successful move towards an East-West union.

A Western Branch of the C.A.S.A. 1928

In 1928, through persuasion and promises, several of the Western clubs agreed to join the C.A.S.A. as a separate Western branch. They proposed that R. J. Verne be elected to the C.A.S.A. executive as the Western vice-president. Five Western clubs, including the Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club of Vancouver and the Omineca Ski Club of Burns Lake, B.C., along with the Banff, Jasper and Camrose Ski Clubs from Alberta,

were prepared to affiliate if this idea met with approval at the Association's next annual meeting. By being considered a separate Western branch, they had hoped to retain their identity, and the authority to direct ski affairs as they saw fit. Their idea was to affiliate with the C.A.S.A., but to retain their own constitution. The Western proposal was formally presented to the C.A.S.A. at their annual meeting in 1928. The proposal was agreed to in principle by members of the Association, and R. J. Verne received an "unofficial appointment...as a Vice President of the Association". The expressed gratitude of the Directors was also recorded in the minutes and a letter sent to Verne in appreciation for what they considered were his "constructive efforts to bring the Western ski clubs into the association."¹⁴ The C.A.S.A. did make it clear, though, that they were not prepared to approve the idea of a separate Western Amateur Ski Association. Those Western clubs wishing to affiliate would be expected to abide by the constitution of the C.A.S.A., and it was primarily this point of contention that separated Eastern and Western ski interests in 1928. That the proposals put forth by the West were only accepted in part was clarified to all Western clubs in a letter sent from the President's office. It was the expressed view of the Association that a Western branch could only be entertained in the geographical sense.¹⁵ They felt

¹⁴Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of the Eighth Annual Meeting, Ottawa, February 25, 1928, (Montreal: C.A.S.A., Historical Records), p. 54.

¹⁵Ibid.

that the C.A.S.A. constitution should be applied to all member clubs, including those of the proposed Western Branch. In any case, in spite of the remaining differences, the two groups were prepared to affiliate, and appeared to be in a favourable position to discuss and debate the remaining issues that had previously prevented a successful union.

Dominion Ski Championships in the West 1931

The ensuing years have been considered crucial in the long struggle towards a national ski organization in Canada. Not only did East-West differences threaten to destroy the entire organization, but internal problems among the clubs in the West appeared, at times, to be unresolvable. At the C.A.S.A. annual meeting in 1929, Banff, Alberta had submitted a bid to host the Dominion Championship for 1930.. This was not approved and the Championships were awarded to the Ottawa Ski Club.¹⁶ The West had for years been anxious to host this meet and, in 1930, the centres of Banff and Revelstoke applied to host the event in 1931.¹⁷ Banff was considered to be the favoured choice among the delegates at the ninth annual meeting, as those present felt such an event would assist the development of skiing throughout the West. However, when the meetings were

¹⁶Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of the Ninth Annual Meeting Tournament, Montreal: February 23, 1929 (Montreal: C.A.S.A., Historical Records), p. 56.

¹⁷Canada Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of the Tenth Annual Meeting, Tournaments Section, Ottawa, February 22, 1930, (Montreal: C.A.S.A., Historical Records), p. 58.

about to begin Mr. Jostein Nordmoe, the official delegate representing most of the Western ski clubs, could not be found. He carried with him the proxy votes of most of the Western ski clubs and his unexplainable absence "created a rather adverse impression among those assembled".¹⁸ Most of the delegates at the meeting had favoured awarding the tournament to the West, but in view of their apparent internal problems, it was generally agreed that this might not be the best time for such a change. Mr. Cliff White, the elected Western Vice President from Banff, was instructed to pass this decision on to the Banff Ski Club and to suggest that they attempt to straighten out their difficulties. The Western Branch Clubs were urged to reapply the next year, however, this incident resulted in an apparent loss of confidence in the organizational capability of the Western Branch of the Association.¹⁹ The Dominion Tournament was then awarded to Montreal but, as it turned out, the Western situation was later clarified, and the C.A.S.A. executive reversed their original decision and awarded the Revelstoke Ski Club a sanction to hold the Dominion Championship in 1931. The West had finally won the right to host a National Ski Championship, even though no Eastern clubs or skiers were represented. The sole Eastern representative was Mr. Sigurd Lockeberg who, in exercising his official duties as chief judge for the C.A.S.A. Technical

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

Board, brought Eastern and Western ski interest to the brink of disaster.

Protest and Dispute; 1931

Awarding the meet to the Revelstoke Club did appease, for a short time, those who felt strongly about Eastern domination of Western skiing. However, before the meet ended, a strongly worded protest to the President of the C.A.S.A. was filed by the Revelstoke Ski Club over the chief judge's decision not to hold the meet on their "Big hill".²⁰ The chief judge argued that due to poor snow conditions, the large jump was not safe for competition. Sigurd Lockeberg, one of the most knowledgeable and respected ski men in Canada, was primarily responsible for this situation which ultimately led to the resignation of the entire technical board.²¹ The C.A.S.A. investigated the protest and in the end upheld Lockeberg's original decision. In his statement to the investigating committee he reported: "In my opinion, the big hill would have endangered the lives of the competitors".²² By the end of the 1931 ski season East-West differences had by no means eased. To some experts, at the time, they appeared even more complicated. The respected position of the C.A.S.A. Technical Board had been

²⁰Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of the Eleventh Annual Meeting, Protest from the Revelstoke Ski Club, Montreal, February 28, 1931, (Montreal: C.A.S.A., Historical Records), p. 60.

²¹Ibid.

²²Chris Toleffsen, The Canadian Amateur Ski Association, A Report of The Technical Ski Board, February 27, 1931, (Montreal: C.A.S.A. Historical Records), p. 61.

challenged by the Revelstoke protest and the decision of one of Canada's top ski officials was under review. Most of the Western ski clubs as well, had by now, lost respect for the governing authorities in the East, as they felt the protest had been unjustly dealt with. The resulting view of many Eastern officials was that, in attempting to resolve the conflicts between East and West, they were in fact threatening to destroy the entire association. The national executive had expressed hope that holding the championship in the West might have helped to improve the situation. Needless to say, relations between the two groups by the end of 1931 had deteriorated even further than before.

Re-organization is Proposed in 1931

After a thorough review of the East-West ski situation in Canada and their respective constitutions, the C.A.S.A. rejected the document submitted on behalf of the Western Canadian Ski Association as being at variance with that of the C.A.S.A. However, in the East many expressed the view that the existing C.A.S.A. constitution was itself not meeting the present needs of the Association and would certainly prove inadequate in the future. There appeared to be a growing consensus of opinion that perhaps the association had outgrown the old constitution, and that this was the appropriate time

for its revision. One report suggested that many of the existing problems were a result of the inability of the present constitution to handle the changes that had taken place in organized skiing since 1920.²³ The West was demanding the right to govern themselves, a fact which they felt was not possible under the constitution as it was originally drafted. It was the opinion of Chris Tollefsen "that, the root of many of the problems confronting the C.A.S.A. lay in the old constitution".²⁴ He was delegated the task of revising the original constitution to incorporate some of the ideas expressed by the Western Branch and to reorganize the structure along more conventional lines.

A New Constitution

During the summer of 1931, Chris Tollefsen began to revise the old document, bringing it up-to-date and incorporating many of the suggested changes. He submitted the constitution in its revised form to the delegates at the C.A.S.A. annual meeting in 1932. It had been designed in such a way that it permitted the Western Branch to retain its identity and preserve its autonomy, while still holding full membership in the parent body. A committee was struck to study this draft and to report back to the delegates. The changes suggested by Tollefsen

²³Canadian Amateur Ski Association. The President's Report, Presented at the Annual Meeting, Montreal, February 28, 1931. (C.A.S.A. Historical Records), p. 60.

²⁴Tollefsen, op. cit., p. 62.

ultimately resulted in the formation of autonomous ski zones within the C.A.S.A. These, in essence, were self-governing units or ski boards, set up to govern skiing in particular geographic districts throughout Canada.²⁵

Western Ski Interests Split, 1932

Eastern Canada, it appeared, had taken the necessary steps to accommodate Western ski interests, and the problem now appeared to be manageable. However, there now appeared to be a split developing in the West, as two rival groups appeared on the scene in 1932. Nels Nelson of Revelstoke, as President of the Western Canadian Amateur Ski Association, headed a group, with the support of about fourteen clubs. To rival this organization, Rudolph Verne, who had become disillusioned by continual Eastern resistance to Western Canadian claims, formed what was referred to as the Canadian Amateur Ski Federation. This group enlisted the support of about seven clubs and was opposed to any move towards affiliation with the C.A.S.A. They proposed to operate as a separate ski organization seeking recognition as a regional governing body.²⁶

Ignoring the situation in the West, Nels Nelson in 1933, approached the C.A.S.A. on behalf of his organization indicating

²⁵Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Constitution and By-Laws, 1932, (Montreal: C.A.S.A., Historical Records).

²⁶R. J. Verne, Letter to the Canadian Amateur Ski Association, March 16, 1932, Historical Records, C.A.S.A. National Office, Montreal.

a desire to join the association to create a national ski organization.²⁷ Since the new constitution had not yet been adopted, it was felt that acceptance of a Western Branch should wait until the revision was completed. A copy of the proposed constitution was sent to Nelson, explaining the idea and function of the ski zones. These ski zones, they said, "would solve the great geographical problems of distance and population" that in the past "had made it difficult for the national organization to operate effectively".²⁸

The state of affairs at the beginning of the 1934 ski season was, according to H. P. Douglas, "quite unsatisfactory". He expressed the opinion "that the Western clubs must soon get together, reorganize, and join the C.A.S.A.",²⁹ or the future of organized skiing in Canada would be in jeopardy. The C.A.S.A., in revising its constitution and by-laws, had prepared the way for entry of a Western branch, and now it was said, "the next move must come from the West".³⁰

²⁷Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Report of a Meeting of the Directors, Technical Board and Provincial Ski Boards, (Montreal: December 14, 1933), p. 2. C.A.S.A. Historical Records.

²⁸H. P. Douglas, "Editorial Comment", Canadian Ski Annual (Montreal: 1933-1934), p. 49.

²⁹H. P. Douglas, "Editorial Comment", Canadian Ski Annual (Montreal: 1934-1935), p. 59.

³⁰H. P. Douglas, Report of the Special Committee, Re: Affiliation of Western Clubs, Submitted to the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Amateur Ski Association, (Montreal: February 23, 1934), C.A.S.A. Historical Records.

Unity in The West, 1934

By February of 1934 Nelson had established himself as the leader of the Western ski organization. The resignation of R. J. Verne from his rival position, brought most of the other clubs into Nelson's organization, and a more or less united Western front was presented to the C.A.S.A. A special committee examining the problem of Western affiliation reported a most satisfactory situation in the spring of 1934. The earlier problems had been resolved, and it appeared that the clubs in the West "were desirous of working in close harmony with the East".³¹ To assure any skeptics who doubted their confidence, the West presented a bid to hold the Dominion tournament in 1935. Remindful of earlier experiences, and as many of the Western clubs had not paid their affiliation fees, the decision on the tournament was deferred until August, 1934. It was then awarded to Montreal, with promises for future consideration of Western bids "when their financial accounts with the association were brought up to date, and if stability remained in their organization."³²

A New Order in the C.A.S.A., 1935

In 1935, through the efforts of W. B. Thompson and Kenington Hague, the remaining East-West differences had been

³¹Canadian Amateur Ski Association, The President's Report, Presented at the Annual Meeting, held in Montreal, February 23, 1934. C.A.S.A. Historical Records.

³²Ibid.

dealt with successfully, and the C.A.S.A. became truly a national association.³³ The new constitution adopted the principle of autonomous ski zones acting as functional units in the association. This approach suited Western clubs and appeared to favourably encourage the development of skiing in all parts of Canada. The major clubs of the West, which included the Revelstoke, Vancouver, the Winter Sports Club, the Grouse Mountain, Hollyburn Pacific and the Camrose Ski Club were all re-instated in the association. In addition, Banff and Calgary planned to join and form the nucleus of a southern Alberta ski zone.³⁴ Nels Nelson, writing in the 1935 ski yearbook, records an appropriate epitaph to the earlier years of struggle. He previews the future, suggesting the beginning of a new era for skiing in Canada, saying:

Those of us, who have gone through the mill from barrel staves up through many hard fought contests on the jumping hill, or in a race pitting our strength and skill not only against the other skiers, but also against poorly laid-out race courses, improperly built ski jumps, inexperienced judges, and green officials, will as pioneers, certainly appreciate the new order of things.³⁵

³³Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting, Dominion Tournament, Montreal, August 28, 1934, (Montreal: C.A.S.A. Historical Records) p. 70.

³⁴G. W. Dunn, President's Report, Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1934-1935), p. 12.

³⁵Nels Nelson, "The New Era", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935-1936), p. 48.

Looking to the years ahead, he points out:

We may be unable to enjoy the modern ski facilities, the standard ski jumps, the new joy of slalom racing, but the mere sight of a group of youngsters going after it hammer and tongs in competition and as never before, in perfect safety, is ample payment for all our pioneering struggles.³⁶

So in 1935 Canadian skiing, it was said, looked to a bright future with a unified association representing ski clubs and skiers in all parts of Canada.

III CANADIAN SKIING RE-ORGANIZED IN 1935

Ski Zones Established

Governing Canadian skiing from coast to coast by a single national executive was practical only in the days when the association of clubs was made up of those from Ontario and Quebec. In 1935, the boundaries of the association had spread as far west as Vancouver and east beyond the Quebec border. The solution that had been suggested by the executive, with strong support from the influential Toronto Ski Club, was to break up the governing units into smaller entities. The association had already divided into an Eastern and Western Division by 1933, and it was now planning to separate these divisions into smaller self-governing ski zones or districts. The immense distances between skiing centres and the sparse population, especially in the West, made this alternative attractive.

³⁶Ibid.

The Constitutional Basis

According to the revised C.A.S.A. constitution of 1935, the country was divided into separate Eastern and Western Divisions, with a vice president representing each division on the executive committee. These vice presidents were in turn responsible for establishing ski zones in their particular areas. The zones were presided over by a chairman and a committee, made up of a representative from each of the member clubs in that zone. An advisory board was then made up by the elected chairmen from each of the zones. Their duties were to assist the C.A.S.A. executive and to advise the national body on local ski matters.

Each zone was a separate and autonomous unit within the organization and structure of the C.A.S.A. The zones were designed to be the governing authority for skiing in a particular area. One of the zone's' prime responsibilities was the conduct and supervision of all forms of ski competition. C.A.S.A. President, W. B. Thompson, suggested that the zone's other duties might include such matters as "publicity, ski instruction, transportation, ski tests and competitions".³⁷ They, in essence, represented the technical board, and the executive of the C.A.S.A., to the local ski area. Zone committees in turn, were made up of one representative from each club in the zone, and annual meetings were held in the fall, just prior to the

³⁷W. B. Thompson, "What the C.A.S.A. is Doing", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935-1936), p. 23.

start of the ski season. The committees themselves, were not considered part of the formal C.A.S.A. organization, though they were sponsored by the parent body, and to some extent governed by its constitution. These committees communicated to the parent body through their chairman, who reported to the vice president in charge of ski zones, who in turn occupied a position on the executive committee of the C.A.S.A. The objectives of the zone committees were more clearly outlined in the 1935 constitution:

The objects of the zone committee shall be to administer the affairs of the association within their zone and more particularly: -

1. To arrange the program of competition to be held in the territory comprised in the zone.
2. To supervise all such competitions with the exception of provincial and dominion championships.
3. To settle all disputes between clubs of the zone.
4. To keep a register of all competitors of clubs in the zone, and for that purpose to issue competitors cards.
5. To rate competitors according to past performance, in each class of event, and to make such changes as may be warranted throughout the season.³⁸

The Laurentian Ski Zone

At the C.A.S.A. annual meeting in 1934 it was decided to proceed with the ski zone arrangement on a somewhat experimental basis. The C.A.S.A. appointed Mr. Chris Tollefsen to the post of vice president, with the specific task of directing

³⁸Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Constitution and By-Laws, as adopted on February 22, 1935, p. 3. C.A.S.A. Historical Records, Montreal.

the development of ski zones within the organization.³⁹ It was agreed that all member clubs in the Quebec area would operate as a separate ski zone during the subsequent ski season. In October of 1934, the Laurentian Ski Zone was officially formed, with "N.C.D. MacTaggart elected as the first Zone Chairman".⁴⁰

During the first year, no constitutional basis for the zone organization existed, which sometimes made the operational tasks rather difficult. "All we did that year was new", related the chairman, "and we met with much abuse and resistance from the C.A.S.A. executive, the ski clubs and the skiers".⁴¹ Weekly meetings were held during the fall of 1934 in preparation for the coming ski season. The zone's first task was to approve a comprehensive program of ski competitions. In addition, they revised and distributed to the member clubs rules and regulations for the conduct of competitions. These measures were aimed at improving and standardizing the technical quality of area ski events. The most formidable task, that of issuing cards to competitors within the zone, also became the responsibility of the new organization. Through some diligent work by zone officials "over three hundred and three cards" had been

³⁹Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of The Fourteenth Annual Meeting, Montreal, February 23, 1934, (Montreal: C.A.S.A., Historical Records), p. 78.

⁴⁰M.C.D. MacTaggart, "Reflections of a Zone Committee Chairman", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935-1936), p. 74.

⁴¹Ibid.

processed by the end of the season, "bringing in a modest \$50.75 to the zone treasury".⁴² By 1937, many new and active committees were operating within the zone and, as a result, much progress was realized in dealing with local problems. It was reported in 1937 that sixteen competitions had been officially sanctioned by the zone, and over three hundred new competitors had been rated through zone cards.⁴³

Even to the average recreational skier, the work done by the zone was in evidence throughout the area. Improved transportation facilities had been brought about primarily through the work of their transportation committee. Old ski trails were being extended, and new ones were cut each weekend. The publicity committee published daily features for the news media in the Montreal area, and this alone, was helping to promote interest in skiing. At the same time, W. L. Ball initiated action for the development of a program of ski instruction, while the ever-present monetary problems were being adequately handled by the finance committee.

By 1940, skiing north of Montreal, had reportedly become a "big business enterprise", due primarily to "the well organized efforts of the Laurentian Ski Zone".⁴⁴ From December, 1939, to mid April, 1940, it was reported by the railways that

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴H. P. Douglas, "Laurentian Ski Ways", Canadian Geographical Journal, Vol. 20, No. 1, January 1940, p. 40.

over 145,000 passengers had been transported to the Laurentian Ski areas, averaging out to about 8,000 skiers per week. To achieve this, the transportation committee, in cooperation with the railways, had sponsored over four hundred special ski trains.⁴⁵ Indeed, the ski zone experiment had met with success in Quebec, due mainly to the dedication of the men connected with its operation.

The Ontario Ski Zone

Ontario ski interests were quick to react to the success of the zone idea in Quebec. H. T. Sam Cliff had been actively campaigning in favour of ski zones for a number of years, and actually began organizing Ontario skiing without constitutional authority as early as 1934. With appropriate foresight, the organization, which began operating that year, had been established in accordance with what was to become the new C.A.S.A. Constitution. As a result, the Ontario Ski Zone officially came into existence in 1935, with full C.A.S.A. approval.⁴⁶ Through the leadership of Sam Cliff, the Ontario Zone became one of the more active and progressive ski organizations in Canada. Certainly much of what is enjoyed today was pioneered by men of this era, who encouraged the development of skiing, not only as a sport but a recreational pastime.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶H. T. Cliff, "The Ontario Ski Zone Report", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935-1936), p. 114.

The Ontario Ski Zone faced two major tasks in its early years. Firstly, interest in skiing had to be actively promoted, and secondly, some encouragement for the formation of ski clubs throughout the province seemed necessary. To raise sufficient funds for zone operation and overcome these basic problems, Cliff introduced the sale of competitors' cards to competing skiers early in 1935. The sale of cards continued, and was expanded in 1936 to include "zone ratings printed on the back".⁴⁷

By 1937, the Zone's Club Development Program had attracted a total of "twenty-five ski clubs"⁴⁸ to the C.A.S.A. A zone office had been opened in Union Station and this served as a clearing house for information and publicity. Much of the committee's efforts were directed towards the promotion of skiing in the province. To this end, demonstrations, exhibitions and movies were presented on behalf of the zone to a variety of interest groups. The zone began operating a film library in 1937 and it soon gained a reputation for housing the most extensive collection of ski movies in Canada. These films were made available to all clubs within the zone and the Ski Association. Initial attempts at establishing a ski school as well, had its beginnings in the fall of 1937. In Toronto, a zone-sponsored program of pre-season ski gymnastics was followed

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸H. T. Cliff, "Ontario Ski Zone Report", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1937-1938), p. 111.

by practical ski instruction sessions during the winter. It was here that the C.A.S.A. proficiency ski tests, originally drawn up by the Toronto Ski Club, enjoyed widespread popularity as part of a zone-sponsored program.

Manitoba Skiing is Organized in 1938

In 1936 Mr. A. A. McCoubrey of Winnipeg assumed the task of organizing a Ski Zone in Manitoba, as suggested by the C.A.S.A. The ground-work for the zone had been established by 1937, as only the Winnipeg Ski Club and the Snowbird Ski Club were members of the C.A.S.A. The formation of an autonomous zone offered some structure in which area ski clubs could develop. It was in the fall of 1936 that a meeting was held "to elect zone officials, and to appoint committees".⁴⁹

The Manitoba Zone, in its trial year, did an admirable job under the chairmanship of McCoubrey. His numerous committees proceeded with their tasks and were effective "in the areas of issuing amateur cards, instruction of officials, judges and flag keepers, and in the rating and classification of skiers".⁵⁰ The Zone actively promoted competitive skiing throughout the province and among the new clubs to the extent that in 1939 "zone slalom events were held at La Riviere, downhill at Brandon, cross country at Winnipeg, and the junior

⁴⁹A. A. McCoubrey, "Manitoba Ski Zone," Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1939-1940), p. 159.

⁵⁰Ibid.

slalom at the newly-formed Selkirk Ski Club".⁵¹ In 1939 six clubs with a combined skiing membership of nine hundred constituted the zone. The Manitoba Ski Zone expected to function even more efficiently during the next season, when it was officially accepted into the C.A.S.A. as the governing authority for skiing in Manitoba.

Other Ski Zones Follow

The Gatineau Ski Zone, although authorized by the C.A.S.A. in the winter of 1936, did not begin operations until 1938. At their first meeting, held in January of that year, Roger Vincent was elected as Zone Chairman, with John P. Taylor as Secretary-Treasurer. The zone was made up of a total of four member clubs, including "the Cliffside, Norland, Ottawa and Siegnory Ski Clubs".⁵²

Gradually, other ski zones became organized as the zone operation became successfully established in the east. Western representatives to the C.A.S.A. soon realized the advantages that could be gained from a well-organized ski zone. The Vancouver Ski Zone appeared on the scene in 1936, with J. Lindsay Loutet as its first chairman.⁵³ It quickly established a zone office in Vancouver, and by the winter of 1937 had hired

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Gatineau Ski Zone Report, The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1937-1938), p. 147.

⁵³"Vancouver Ski Zone Report", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1937-1938), p. 120.

ski instructors and were conducting classes in Hollyburn Ridge. The Rocky Mountain Ski Zone became operational in 1938 through the enthusiasm of its first chairman, Alan Carscallen.⁵⁴ This area was geographically handicapped by being spread over a vast mountain area. This tended to isolate member clubs, making it difficult to meet on a regular basis for either meetings or competitions. Banff, Alberta, appeared to be the focal point for this zone, since it was more or less centrally located to the interior of British Columbia and to Calgary and southern Alberta.

The smallest zone in the association at this time was the St. Maurice Valley Zone in Quebec. It included only four ski clubs, with an active membership of about "eight hundred".⁵⁵ Each of the clubs had developed excellent ski jumping facilities and, as a result, many good competitors. Slalom and downhill skiing had not attracted a large following due to the absence of suitable hills. However, in 1938, the opening of the St. Jaques de Piles area, north of Trois Riviere, saw an interest in hill skiing begin to develop. The St. Maurice Valley zone, being small, was hampered primarily by a lack of financial support. It had consequently done little in the area of promotion, publicity or education with respect to skiing.⁵⁶

⁵⁴"The Rocky Mountain Ski Zone Report", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1938-1939), p. 161.

⁵⁵"St. Maurice Valley Zone Report", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1938-1939), p. 144.

⁵⁶Ibid.

The Northern Alberta Ski Zone came into existence in 1938, with Rex Gibson as its first chairman. In 1939, George Harris, who had been acting in the capacity of secretary, also assumed the duties of acting zone chairman, in the enforced absence of the regular elected officer. Five clubs were reported to have joined, including "The Eskimos, Edmonton, Voyageurs, and Varsity Outdoors from Edmonton and the Camrose Ski Club". At this time, all clubs were reported active in competitive ski program in the province.⁵⁷

The Saguenay Ski Zone made its appearance in 1939 with six clubs from the Chicoutimi and Lake St. John's district of Quebec.⁵⁸ As another small zone, it suffered from the lack of funds but was nevertheless very active in all aspects of skiing. By late 1939, a total of nine ski zones had been organized and were functioning effectively in Canada.

Three Ski Divisions in the C.A.S.A. - 1939-1940

As the ski zone organization continued to extend its influence in the promotion of skiing in Canada, many more clubs sought membership in the C.A.S.A. Consequently, the executive of the National Association was confronted with those regional problems the existing zones could not adequately deal with. They began to examine the organization with a view to further

⁵⁷G. Harris, Northern Alberta Ski Zone Report, The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1939-1940), p. 163.

⁵⁸Saguenay Ski Zone Report, The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1939-1940), p. 154.

breakdowns of the existing two divisional structures. A re-organization of ski area boundaries appeared to offer a solution to the problem. In an effort to keep pace with the varied rate of growth in certain areas, a new divisional organization was proposed in 1939. As a result, the new Western Canadian Ski Division now would include all ski clubs in British Columbia and Alberta. The Central Ski Division would include all clubs in Saskatchewan and in Manitoba, as well as those in the Ontario and Gatineau Ski Zones. The Eastern Ski Division now contained all those clubs east of the Gatineau Zone, including the Maritime provinces.⁵⁹ An area with a sufficient number of ski clubs could, if it appeared feasible, apply to the C.A.S.A. for zone status. Thus, divisions served large geographical areas, in which the smaller ski zones were established to provide a service to a district or regional area.

Each of the three ski divisions was represented on the C.A.S.A. executive committee by a Vice President. He, in turn, directed the operation of clubs and zones within his division. A Vice Chairman of the Divisional Technical Board was also a member of the C.A.S.A. Executive Committee and was responsible for all matters of a technical nature within his area of responsibility. The C.A.S.A., over the years, had changed a great deal, in both structure and function since its formation in 1921.⁶⁰

⁵⁹A Report on the Formation of New Divisions in the C.A.S.A., Canadian Ski Yearbook (Montreal: 1939-1940), p. 111.

⁶⁰Ibid.

By 1940, the executive of the C.A.S.A. were well aware of the need for the organizational changes to continue, if the association was to continue to be a dynamic force in directing skiing in Canada. The growth of the sport had varied in areas across the country and the governing organization over the years had acquired a certain degree of flexibility in dealing with the many regional, local and national problems. Ultimate control was vested with the C.A.S.A. National Executive, but yet divisions, zones and ski clubs were granted sufficient autonomy to conduct their affairs without approval or direction from the national body. The C.A.S.A. was, in 1940, an enthusiastic and stimulating organization conducive to new ideas, programs and projects.⁶¹

⁶¹Ibid.

CHAPTER XI

SKIING INSTITUTIONS DEVELOP IN CANADA

I SKI INSTRUCTION

The Concern of the C.A.S.A.

The Canadian Amateur Ski Association developed an early interest in the proficiency level of skiing. As early as 1921 they expressed concern over the quality of ski instruction available to ski clubs and the public.¹ However, it was not until around 1930, when hill skiing became popular, that the need for an organized program in this area became evident. Groomed hills, steep ski slopes and wide trails brought speed skiing within the grasp of anyone who could climb the hill, and an ever-increasing number of novice skiers were being attracted to the sport.² Certain members of the association pointed out that high standards of instruction should be maintained among the many ski schools operating throughout the country. It was their view that a ski organization such as the C.A.S.A., should exert an influence and somewhat control the developments that were evident at the time.

As far back as 1911, several private ski schools were operating successfully in many parts of the country. Most of

¹Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of the First Annual Meeting, Montreal, 1921, C.A.S.A. Historical Records, Montreal.

²Ibid.

these offered excellent instructional programs, staffed by qualified personnel, while others offered little in the way of a standard program. According to Davidson, Emile Cochand was believed to have been one of the first to offer "ski technique instruction in Canada."³ He had been brought to Canada as a ski instructor by the owner of a hotel in the village of St. Agathe des Monts, where he operated one of the first ski schools. Throughout Eastern Canada, at this time, resort owners "would often employ an outstanding European performer to instruct guests in the art of skiing,"⁴ in an attempt to attract new visitors to their establishments.

C.A.S.A. Proficiency Tests

Early in 1926 the Canadian Amateur Ski Association issued a public plea for the improvement of ski technique in the country. Since hill skiing was becoming increasingly popular, more and more people were frequenting the hills and ski trails. As a result, an increased effort was required by the various ski organizations to encourage the proper methods of skiing.⁵ One approach to a solution appeared in the offering of a national program of graded ski tests with appropriate progressions, stressing the use of what was considered proper

³Stuart Davidson, "A History of Games and Sports in Eastern Canada Before World War I", (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1951), p. 136.

⁴Ibid.

⁵H. P. Douglas, "Editorial Comments", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1927-1928), p. 14.

technique and style. At the C.A.S.A. annual meeting in February, 1926, the technical board of the C.A.S.A. was given the task of preparing official ski proficiency tests. Ski tests had been used successfully by the Toronto Ski Club for several years, and they reported that the program served as an incentive for individual skiers in the club to improve their skiing.

The First Ski Tests

The Canadian Amateur Ski Association ski tests were first sponsored and published in 1927, and were patterned after those of the Ski Club of Great Britain, and the ones adopted earlier by the Toronto Ski Club. The tests were comprehensive in nature and were divided into three classes, advancing from beginner to expert. They were specifically designed so that examinations for the third and second class awards could be administered and awarded by locally approved authorities. The first class, or advanced skiing tests, were to be held annually, as part of the Dominion Ski Tournament and could only be administered by an appointed representative of the C.A.S.A. Technical Ski Board. Thus, the initial C.A.S.A. proficiency test session for the first class awards was held at Shawbridge in conjunction with the Dominion Ski Tournament on February 24, 1928. Second and third class tests were held as well, and H. P. Douglas, "one of the early proponents of 'style in Canadian skiing'," described the event by saying, "It was particularly interesting to see the number of young people, girls as well as boys, who

were not only skiing well, but in excellent form."⁶

Ski clubs were urged to encourage from among their membership support for the adoption of the C.A.S.A. tests as part of their club program. It was perhaps the Toronto Ski Club which took the lead in promoting ski tests throughout their club and later throughout the province of Ontario. The Ottawa Ski Club, with a large membership of non-competitive skiers, found the ski proficiency test popular, and conducted a successful program for several years.

Ski Tests Evaluated

In 1928, the C.A.S.A. was preparing to act on the crucial problem of providing instruction to the large number of adult beginners and children who were more frequently being seen on ski hills throughout the country. The Ottawa Ski Club had, for several years, offered an instructional program to children and were "commended for their efforts in pioneering this aspect of the sport in Canada".⁷ That same year the association drew attention to the increased interest in skiing by middle-aged adults, who, they reported, "were now starting to ski in ever increasing numbers".⁸

Many ski authorities in Western Canada at this time

⁶Ibid.

⁷Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of the Eighth Annual Meeting, The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1928-1929), p. 4.

⁸Ibid.

tended to ignore style as an important part of skiing, while their Eastern counterparts voiced the opinion that "style, proper form, or whatever else you may call it, is the real basis of success in sports."⁹ In Canada it seems, it was becoming increasingly important to exhibit style as well as skill in the sport of skiing. A counter view voiced by many skiers in the West was "that a style producing a winning performance had to be considered the best".¹⁰ First and second class tests proved to be relatively difficult and, by 1930, very few had been awarded. Only two Canadians, M. G. Putman of the Toronto Ski Club and J. Nordmoe of the Camrose Ski Club, had been honoured by being awarded C.A.S.A. First Class Gold badges. Second Class awards were similarly few in number, as only H. T. Cliff, E. H. Cousens, W. J. Gwile, R. Gunn and A. C. Snively had received these awards.¹¹

Control Over Ski Instruction

The Canadian Amateur Ski Association had, since its founding, become increasingly aware of the need for some organization to control the development of instructional skiing in Canada. Around 1930, the governors of the Ski Association came to realize that the ski instruction available through club

⁹H. P. Douglas, "Editorial Comment", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1929-1930), p. 7.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹"The 1930 C.A.S.A. Ski Test List", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1934), p. 71.

programs was becoming ineffective in meeting the needs of the skiing public. Ski accidents were rising, due in part, it was said, to the increased numbers of beginners who were learning to ski by trial and error.¹²

The Montreal Ski Club was fortunate to have acquired the services of the Duke of Luechtenburg in 1933 as the club's professional ski instructor. He was, according to one report, "a delightful man and a fine instructor, having been a student of the great European skier and teacher, Hannes Schnieder".¹³ His instructional techniques produced remarkable results, and it was reported that his pupils, "both young and old, demonstrated a knowledge of all running turns and the ability to put them into practice".¹⁴ Many other ski clubs offered excellent programs, which were also directed by competent instructors. However, these advantages were available only to members of an organized club. The general skiing public in Canada were left more or less exposed to the unqualified instructor, operating on his own, or through some commercial interest. It was in this area that the greatest concern was expressed by the governing association.

The Canadian Ski School Committee, 1936

The Canadian Ski School enjoyed a rather humble beginning

¹²"Editorial Comments", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal, 1934), p. 71

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

when a small steering committee of the C.A.S.A. was formed in 1936. They were empowered to act as a controlling agency which would attempt to influence the type and extent of ski instruction in Canada. It was becoming evident that many "self-styled instructors, with little or no ability"¹⁵ were practicing in Canadian ski centres. This first Canadian Ski School Committee was chaired by the noted ski authority, Dr. W. L. Ball, and included Herman Smith Johansen and Harry Pangman, two of the most knowledgeable ski men in the country. Their objectives were outlined as, first of all to provide an organizational basis for the systematic teaching of skiing. Secondly, they were to protect the competent and qualified instructor from unfair competition, and thirdly, to ensure that the skiing public would be able to enjoy the benefits of sound instruction.¹⁶

The Laurentian Zone Experiment

The first step towards attaining these ends was the implementation of a program of "training, examining and certifying of all ski instructors in Canada"¹⁷ on a trail basis. For this reason the Laurentian Ski Zone was selected as the area in which the C.A.S.A. Ski School Committee would operate. To this

¹⁵Statement, Dr. W. L. Ball, Ottawa, Personal Interview, June 1967.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷W. L. Ball, "The C.A.S.A. Ski School", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1937), p. 106.

end, a survey was made of all the known instructors in the Laurentian Ski Zone with the result that C.A.S.A. approved instructors' cards were issued to seven of the well established ski schools for the 1937 season. The Duke of Luechtenberg accepted the position of advisor to the Canadian Ski School, and it was agreed that all future ski school instructors would be required to pass a proficiency test set by the advisor. At the Laurentian Zone meeting in 1938, Mr. Jack Miller desperately requested Ski Association aid in preventing an influx of unqualified instructors from the U.S.A. Through the efforts of Harry Pangman, the Minister of Immigration was persuaded to cooperate with the work of the Committee in order to "prevent transient ski instructors from entering Canada unless they had received an official appointment with a Canadian Club or Hotel."¹⁸

Heinz Von Allmen, 1938

Heinz Von Allmen was appointed Technical Advisor to the Ski School late in 1938, replacing the Duke of Luechtenburg. He was a dynamic and talented individual, and according to a spokesman for the committee, "one of the most famous Swiss skiers and teachers",¹⁹ Only twenty-five years old when he arrived in Canada, he spoke both English and French fluently. He had won the French National Alpine Championship in 1936 and

¹⁸A. H. Pangman, "The Canadian Ski School Association", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1938), p. 98.

¹⁹Ibid.

the Swiss Championship in 1937. Much of the credit for bringing Von Allmen to Canada should perhaps go to Mr. Bartlett Morgan, of the Henry Morgan Co. Ltd. in Montreal. Morgan had spent the better part of one whole winter in Europe, interviewing both Swiss and Austrian skiers, who he considered might be interested in teaching skiing in Canada. The Henry Morgan Co. Ltd. had guaranteed Von Allmen a sum of money for his services, and the C.A.S.A. Committee had agreed to cooperate with him in his efforts to promote ski instruction. The long search for a Canadian ski technique was beginning to broaden, and it was suggested at one of the meetings that the Canadian school should "embrace the best from the Austrian, Swiss and American methods and techniques".²⁰

Ski School, 1938

During a week in December, 1938, a short ski instructors' course was given by the newly appointed advisor. At this school twelve instructors received their C.A.S.A. instructors' badges. Certified ski schools, at this time, were located at St. Jovite and Grey Rocks Inn, and were directed by Hans Falkner, Josel Gastrein and Hermann Gadner. The St. Marquerites and Alpine Inn Ski Schools were directed by Von Allmen himself. The St. Saveur Ski School was headed by the Duke of Luechtenburg and Luigi Foeger, while the school at Shawbridge was headed by Mario Gabriell. Regular ski classes were also being

²⁰Ball, op. cit., p. 106.

held in the city of Montreal during the week and on weekends, a venture that was supervised by local ski clubs as a public service.²¹

A Ski Instruction Association is Formed

On December 18, 1938, the first of many meetings between ski instructors and the C.A.S.A. Ski School Committee took place. An outcome of this was a unanimous vote in favour of continued cooperation between both groups. At the Alpine Inn, on January 2, 1939, the ski instructors held a meeting and announced the formation of a Canadian Ski Instructors' Association. They declared themselves the agency responsible for all matters relating to the ski instructor, and to present the views of the instructors to the C.A.S.A. Ski School Committee. A committee elected to represent the instructors included "Jack Miller, Heinz Von Allmen, Hans Falkner, Hermann Gadner, and the Duke of Luechtenburg".²² One of the first requirements that faced this organization was the preparation of a standard book of ski instruction. The newly formed instructors' association was awarded the task of drawing up and presenting to the C.A.S.A. Committee "a handbook to be known as the Canadian Ski Manual".²³ However, the instructors found it difficult to work together as a committee and the task was turned over to the C.A.S.A. Ski School Committee, who in turn,

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

worked during the summer of 1939 to prepare a suitable manual for use during the coming ski season. By the end of the 1939 ski season there was a total of fourteen qualified instructors working in the Laurentian Zone and twelve others operating ski schools with C.A.S.A. approval.

Louis Cochand 1939

Louis Cochand had, in the winter of 1939, returned from a lengthy stay in Europe, where he had spent considerable time studying the methods of instruction employed by the European ski schools. He succeeded Von Allmen as chief examiner for the Canadian Ski School in the spring of that year, and brought to the position years of practical experience in Canada, as well as the latest methods being practiced abroad. That year, he persuaded the committee to adopt the proposal of having first-aid included in all ski instruction courses. In future, then, all ski instructors would have to produce a recognized first-aid certificate before their instructors' card could be approved. With the growing threat of war in Europe, the committee endorsed a resolution that instructors were to stress "skiing as a means to physical fitness" in programs for the coming season.²⁴

The Basis for the Canadian Ski Instructors' Alliance

The basis had been established, by 1939, for the eventual

²⁴Ibid.

formation of the Canadian Ski Instructors' Alliance, a strong, self-governing body of professional ski instructors in Canada. The C.A.S.A. had given them the early impetus through its test program, and later direction through the Canadian Ski School Committee. This committee, in the Laurentian Ski Zone, had done most of the work in organizing the instructors and in producing the first Canadian instructors' manual. It was due to the work of this committee, its Chairman, Dr. W. L. Ball, and men such as the Duke of Luechtenburg, Heinz Von Allmen, and Louis Cochand, that Canada's skiing public today enjoys one of the world's most reputable programs of ski instruction.

II FIRST AID AND THE CANADIAN SKI PATROL SYSTEM

A Need is Recognized 1935

By 1935 skiing accidents were increasing at such an alarming rate that the President of the C.A.S.A., in his annual message, made a plea to all skiers in Canada to cooperate in a safety campaign. The popularity of hill skiing, and the modern craze for speed, resulted in the serious overcrowding of "poorly prepared ski hills".²⁵ As ski conditions on these natural downhill trails were unpredictable, accidents became more frequent. These prevailing conditions made the average skier prone to accidents, and the demand for ski safety began to receive support

²⁵"President's Report", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935), p. 24.

from both the Ski Association as well as the skiing public.²⁶

The Role of the C.A.S.A.

The Canadian Amateur Ski Association considered the problem of ski safety at their annual meeting in 1935. It was suggested, then, that the delegates from the Montreal area investigate and report back on the feasibility of setting up a series of first aid posts in the nearby Laurentians on a one-year experimental basis.²⁷ The C.A.S.A. authorized the Montreal Ski Club to direct the project on a one-year experimental basis as they had already begun to work on the problem through contacts with the Quebec Provincial Council of the St. John Ambulance Association.

St. John Ambulance Association 1935

When informed of the interest of the Ski Association, a Mr. MacPherson, President of the St. John Ambulance Brigade and his executive endorsed the proposal and pledged the co-operation of their organization. It was agreed that the first and most important problem was the treatment of ski accidents on the scene or at the ski hill. Most of the ski areas were somewhat remote from hospitals, ambulance services, or other treatment centres. To help overcome the problems related to early or immediate treatment, the Montreal Association of the

²⁶D. Batchelor, "Skiing in Canada", Canadian Geographical Journal, February 1937, p. 61.

²⁷"First Aid on Ski", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935), p. 72.

St. John Ambulance, agreed to man and operate a series of first aid stations throughout the Laurentian ski area. To assist them in administering to the injured skiers, a special course was held in the fall of 1935, on the treatment and care of ski injuries.²⁸

Laurentian First Aid Posts

After one year of operation the experiment was judged a success, and its continued extension in the future was approved unanimously. The problem now appeared to be in keeping pace with the increase in the number of ski areas that required the services of a first aid station. However, a start had been made and it was written in the 1936 edition of the Canadian Ski Yearbook "that first aid now took its place as a definite part of Canada's most popular winter sport".²⁹

The following winter saw the establishment of first aid stations extended in the Laurentians, under the direction of the St. John Ambulance Brigade. These stations were located at St. Marguerite, Val Morin, St. Jovite, Shawbridge, St. Saveur and one on Mount Royal in Montreal. A Laurentian ski patroller of the 1930 era was equipped with uniform, snowshoes, toboggan and first aid kit, and was prepared to render service free of charge, every Saturday and Sunday afternoon. It was reported

²⁸"Report from the St. John Ambulance Association", The Canadian Ski Yearbook (Montreal: 1936), p. 40.

²⁹Ibid.

that the Laurentian First Aid Stations treated one hundred and sixty-four injury cases during the first season of operation, and this total grew to two hundred and fifty-four the following winter. By 1938 reported accident cases in the Laurentian ski area alone, had risen to five hundred and thirty-two.³⁰

The growing costs of first aid equipment and the increased requirements for supplies made it difficult for the C.A.S.A. to continue its support. The success of the venture seemed to hinge on the availability of funds. It was again the great benefactor of Canadian Amateur Sport, Mr. Sydney Dawes, who was able to raise a sum of four hundred dollars, which enabled the service to be continued. It was said that the future of the venture would, as well, depend on "what value clubs and skiers place on safety and first aid".³¹ According to one source, the increased number of ski accidents during the latter part of the 1930 period could be attributed mostly to "the popularity of hill skiing and down-hill racing along with the stiff boots and down-pull bindings" used by skiers employing "the modern down-hill techniques".³²

A National Awareness Develops

Soon after the success of the program in the Laurentians, similar first aid posts began to appear throughout the country.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²The Montreal Gazette, March 10, 1944, p. 6.

The Vancouver area reported that they had set up a program of similar status in 1937. To meet the increased demand and in an attempt to control the increasing number of ski accidents, the C.A.S.A. assumed a more dominant role in this area. In 1938, Mr. Neil M. Stewart was appointed Chairman of the Laurentian Zone First Aid Committee and was directly responsible to the C.A.S.A. His work, with respect to first aid and the treatment of ski injuries laid a foundation for the following stages in the development of a National First Aid Program in skiing.³³ By now, the volunteers of the St. John Ambulance had set up a chain of first aid posts throughout all the major ski areas and manned six of these stations on weekends. Extra men were also available and were sent out to cover ski competitions and special ski events.

In the Montreal area alone, it was reported during the winter of 1938, that from sixteen to twenty men were required for duty each weekend of the ski season. The situation was rapidly becoming critical and as the injury rate continued to increase a greater stress was placed on the limited services that the first aider was prepared to administer. It appeared that a wide scale educational program of ski safety would have to be carried out, and the agency responsible for the first aid would have to reorganize to accommodate the increasing demand for service.

³³N. M. Stewart, "First Aid in the Laurentians", The Canadian Ski Yearbook (Montreal: 1939-1940), p. 71.

Following a detailed study of accident reports, Stewart reported that there could be no doubt that "the many ski accidents are the result of hare-brained recklessness".³⁴ This, he contended, was the root of the problem and he felt that it should become the concern of the C.A.S.A.

The Canadian Ski Patrol, 1939

The Canadian Amateur Ski Association, in response to the growing demand for increased ski safety, formed a national committee in 1939 to deal directly with the problem. The committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Douglas Firth of Toronto, became concerned with setting up a separate agency to deal with first aid to skiers. They were cognizant of the Ski Patrol Movement in the U.S.A. and of the work of a patrol committee, set up by the United States Amateur Ski Association. The American group, through the efforts of its chairman, C. M. Dole, formed an organization called the National Ski Patrol System in 1937. The results of this program were examined and, with the cooperation of the American group, a similar organization was proposed for Canada. In the spring of 1940, the Canadian Ski Patrol was officially formed, patterned after its American counterpart. The organization was soon operational, as Bill Hearn of Toronto reportedly led the first Canadian Ski Patrol that same year for the Toronto Ski Club.³⁵

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵The Ski Runner of the Toronto Ski Club, January 1967, p. 4; Personal Correspondence, Mr. W. Hearn, Toronto, Ontario.

The significance of this volunteer organization and its unmistakable contribution to the growth and development of skiing in Canada was summarized by H. P. Douglas, when he stated that he considered "the Ski Patrol Movement as quite the most important step that has taken place in my day".³⁶ Through its efforts, the danger of serious injuries, resulting from a ski accident or subsequent removal from the ski hill, had been greatly reduced.

³⁶The Montreal Gazette, March 10, 1944.

CHAPTER XII

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN COMPETITIVE SKIING

I TOWARDS A NATIONAL SKI CHAMPIONSHIP

The Canadian Ski Championships, 1909

Ski jumping in Montreal had become popular to such an extent that, in 1908, it was suggested that the Montreal Ski Club host a National Championships. What was entitled the first Canadian Ski Jumping Championship was subsequently held on February 13, 1909, on the Westmount Boulevard Hill. Technical and organizational assistance came from local citizens who had witnessed similar events in Norway and, as a result, "the meet was patterned after the Norwegian tradition".¹ The Governor General's Vice Regal Party journeyed to Montreal from Ottawa to witness the historic sporting event, and their presence, it was said, "added dignity to the occasion".² "The Earl and Countess Grey", according to Douglas, "viewed the event with great interest", as this was to them, as it was to most Montrealers, "a novel experience".³ Other civic officials in attendance included the mayor and prominent people from both government and business. The unfortunates of that day appeared

¹Douglas, op. cit., p. 32.

²"Vice Regal Party at Jump Meet", The Canadian Courier, February 20, 1909, p. 13.

³Douglas, op. cit., p. 32.

to be the members of a military band, brought in to provide additional entertainment for the public. "The sharp, freezing air", recalls Douglas, "played havoc with their performance... there was such discord when they started to play."⁴ The Championship event achieved a somewhat international stature with the rather impromptu appearance of competitors from the Nansen Ski Club of Berlin Mills, New Hampshire. The Montreal Ski Club nevertheless emerged successfully from the afternoon's competition, by winning the three top prizes. Registering a jump of eight feet, E. Stettum, of the host club, was awarded first prize, while team-mate Ernie Wilson, placed second. Peter MacKinnon won the longest standing jump award, and also established a new hill record "with a jump of eighty-two feet, judged as the best performance of the day".⁵

A National Ski Championship in the C.A.S.A.

After 1921, the Dominion Ski Championships soon became the most important single ski competition in Canada. During the early years the championship event was considered one of the major projects for the young association, and to a great extent, one of its prime reasons for existence. Until 1923, the Dominion Ski Championship was exclusive to Eastern Canada, as travel and financial limitations all but eliminated Western participation. Championships would usually alternate between Ottawa and

⁴Ibid.

⁵The Canadian Courier, loc. cit.

Montreal, with the competition limited to cross country and ski jumping events. In the minutes of the Association's first annual meeting, it stated, "championship events shall be declared open to all Canadian Amateur skiers who were officially entered, and who had paid the entry fee of \$1.00".⁶

In the organizational arrangements, local ski clubs were responsible for conducting elimination tournaments prior to the National event. This was to ensure that only the top skiers would become eligible for the Dominion Competition. A qualification rule in ski jumping suggested that entrants were to have achieved a minimum distance standard of seventy feet in an official competition prior to having their entries accepted for the Dominion Championship. This rule, introduced in 1921, and adopted in 1922, was apparently never rigidly enforced by the association or the ski club hosting the championship.⁷ The Association provided national awards to all winners in the form of C.A.S.A. gold, silver and bronze medals. The task of financing the championship was to be borne by the host club, who in turn, were to turn over to the association, fifty per cent of the revenue taken in. This financial resource for several years became the main source of association funds, and much of their program for the following year depended on the financial success of the annual tournament.

⁶Minutes of the First Annual Meeting, (Montreal: February 19, 1921), C.A.S.A. Historical Records.

⁷Ibid.

The Dominion Ski Tournament, 1921

The first official Dominion Ski Tournament, sponsored by the C.A.S.A., was held on the weekend of February 19, 1921, in the city of Montreal, and was considered an "unqualified success."⁸ For the first time in Canada, a championship event had been held with the support of a unified association of ski clubs. Invitations had been extended to all Eastern Canadian Ski Clubs, as well as to "friends from across the line...the Lake Placid, Sarnac Lake, Berlin Mills and Dartmouth Ski Clubs".⁹ Chris Tollefsen, considered by the association as one of the foremost technical experts on skiing, was responsible for the organization and conduct of the first Association Championship. The original idea was to hold the cross country events at Shawbridge, Quebec, however, an untimely illness to Mrs. Marshall, one of the proposed hosts and owner of the lodge, forced a last minute change in plans. An area on Mount Royal was selected as an alternate site, which complimented the jumping tournament, which was to be scheduled for Saturday on the Cote Des Nieges Jump.¹⁰ Poor weather conditions plagued meet officials, as rain fell during the week preceding the event. However, a sudden drop in temperature, and subsequent snowfall, were welcomed by all concerned as Saturday morning

⁸"First Canadian Amateur Ski Association Tournament", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1921), p. 27.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

"came bright and cold, with a temperature of ten above zero".¹¹ Spectators began to gather at the jump hill early and standing room was reported to be at a premium. By three thirty, "when the bugle called the first jumper on his way", an enormous crowd estimated at five thousand had assembled to view what was considered to be, "the premier ski event in Canada".¹² Hill Captain, Peter MacKinnon, "had done an admirable job", it was said, "in transforming the icy surface of the jump hill into conditions that would make record performances possible".¹³

In the jumping competition held on February 19, all three jumps were scored by a panel of tournament judges. Style scores on each jump ranged from eight to a maximum of twenty points, though it was noted that "a jump must be exceptionally good to score over sixteen points".¹⁴ Distance points were recorded on the basis of one point for each foot of distance. A fourth jump, referred to as the "longest standing jump", was a separate competition in which only "distance determined the winner".¹⁵ Mr. E. Sundberg of Temiskaming, Ontario, became the first winner of a Dominion Ski Jumping Championship, sanctioned by the new association. With jumps of eighty-eight, ninety-one, and ninety-two feet recorded,

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Loc. cit., p. 28.

¹³Loc. cit., p. 29.

¹⁴"Rules for Jumping", Minutes of the First Annual Meeting, Montreal, February 29, 1921, C.A.S.A. Historical Records, Montreal.

¹⁵Ibid.

he was awarded the first C.A.S.A. gold medal and the Waagen Challenge Cup, to be retained for one year. Frank MacKinnon of Montreal placed second in the regular competitions, but won the longest standing jump event with a ninety-five foot performance.¹⁶

Social events were the order for Saturday evening, as competitors, visitors and meet officials were guests of the host club at a banquet held in their clubhouse. Following the traditional meal, the President spoke briefly on the status of Canadian skiing, while C. E. Mortureux, of Ottawa, contributed a short, humorous speech. The banquet formalities concluded with a few words of appreciation from the representatives of visiting ski clubs, and the group then retired to the club-rooms to end the evening with the usual songs, music and dancing.

The weather conditions had not improved to any extent on the Sunday, as zero temperatures and a bitter cold wind greeted the competitors for the cross country race. "The snow was hard and crusty" and, according to the report on the meet, "conditions were anything but good for a ten mile mountain race".¹⁷ Morley Milne and T. Pickering had set the cross country course, which started at the clubhouse of the Montreal Ski Club. The icy conditions that prevailed made waxing extremely difficult and, as a result, the race became a challenge

¹⁶Report of the First Canadian Amateur Ski Association Tournament, Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1921), p. 27.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 29.

to all participating skiers. Frank MacKinnon became the first cross country champion of the C.A.S.A., as he won the race with a time of one hour, ten minutes and twenty seconds. He was awarded the Gold medal in cross country and the Devlin Bowl, a perpetual challenge trophy for Canadian cross country ski racing.

The success of this first official Canadian Ski Championship had been the result of diligent work by the host club. The efficient manner in which the many problems were overcome set a high standard for future national events. The Montreal Ski Club had reportedly done an admirable job in staging the first National Ski Championship. To those attending, it had been "a pleasurable event", as they were treated to a well-organized and properly conducted meet, not to mention the "beans, pie and entertainment".¹⁸

The Canadian All-Around Ski Championship 1927

Since the first championship in 1921, the Dominion Ski Championship consisted of the separate events of jumping and cross country. Among the existing clubs in the association, there had been some concern expressed that such an event separation might encourage future competitors to specialize. This, to many of the leading experts of the day, "was not in the best interest of the sport".¹⁹ In 1922, a proposal was

¹⁸Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁹Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of the Second Annual Meeting, Ottawa, February 25, 1922, C.A.S.A. Historical Records, Montreal.

brought to the annual meeting, which suggested the inclusion of a third event on the championship program. This event, a combined championship, would go to the skier with the best performance in both jumping and cross country. Such a change, they felt, would encourage Canadian skiers to become proficient in the classical nordic combined ski event, which, although extremely popular throughout Europe, did not seem attractive to Canadian skiers. "The winner", they proposed, would be declared "the all-around ski champion of Canada".²⁰

The question of nordic combined skiing remained at the discussion table that year, and it was not re-introduced until the 1925 annual meeting. At this time, the principle of nordic combined skiing remained unresolved, as its adoption required consideration and approval by all member clubs. In 1926, the president announced general club support for the idea, and it appeared that the Canadian All-Around Ski Championship would soon become a reality. Since all competitors that year had not been warned of the implied change in rules, it was agreed to hold a non-championship event in 1926. It was announced at the annual meeting "that commencing in 1927, the skier obtaining the highest combined point totals for jumping and racing shall be awarded Canadian Amateur Ski Association gold, silver and bronze medals".²¹ A special prize, in the form of a

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of the Fourth Annual Meeting, Montreal, February 21, 1925, p. 43, C.A.S.A. Historical Records, Montreal.

perpetual challenge trophy, was also to be awarded, along with the title of "Canadian All-Around Ski Champion".²² And so the C.A.S.A., besides awarding the C. B. Waggen cup for ski jumping and the Devlin Bowl for cross country racing, added the Sir Henry Thornton Trophy, which would be presented to the Nordic Combined winner in 1927.

First Western Canadian Ski Championship 1928

The first Western Canadian Ski Championship, sanctioned by the C.A.S.A., took place at Banff, Alberta, on the weekend of February 8, 1928. It was primarily through the efforts of local ski enthusiasts, Clifford White and Cyril Paris, that the event became a reality. Western ski clubs were just beginning to realize the importance of having an organized body direct the interests of skiing and, as a result, were anxious to initiate cooperative action in the West. It was hoped that part of the stimulus for such an effort might come from an annual ski championship. The organizers were overwhelmed by the amount of local enthusiasm, as over two thousand spectators witnessed the tournament ski events.

Most of the top skiers in the West, at that time, took part in the Championship and it was a relatively small club from Central Alberta that won most of the prizes. The Camrose Ski Club emerged from that meet as one of the strongest competitive clubs in the West. Outstanding performers representing

²²Ibid.

that club were Jostein Nordmoe, who won the ski jumping championship and Kaare Engstad, who won the eighteen kilometre cross country race. Nordmoe placed third in the cross country, and with his victory in jumping was awarded the Combined Ski Championship. Olaf Tollefsen, of Vancouver, won the longest standing jump trophy, while Nordmoe was also awarded the, "Scandinavian Cup" by the judges for having the best style points on a single jump.²³ The apparent success of the first championship prompted the organizers to suggest that it continue to be held as an annual competition. The meet, scheduled for Revelstoke in February of 1929, suffered a setback when the transportation system was paralysed by a railway accident, which resulted in the collapse of a bridge near Revelstoke. Few skiers attended this meet, as all areas west of Banff were temporarily isolated.²⁴

The Championships in 1930 were held during the first week of February, and were sponsored by the Revelstoke Ski Club. The cross country race was won by Nils Jorstad of Winnipeg, followed by Peter Sandness of Burns Lake, B.C., and Eric Sandstrom of Vancouver. Nels Nelson won the special jumping event, while Peter Sandness captured the Nordic Combined or All Around Championship.²⁵ The Dominion Tournament was held

²³"Western Canadian Skiing", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1928-1929), p. 68.

²⁴"Western Report", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1928-1929), p. 68.

²⁵Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of the Tenth Annual Meeting, The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1930), p. 20.

in Revelstoke in 1931 and, due to this, the Western Championships were not held that year. The west, it appeared, was not both prepared, and capable, of assuming the leadership and responsibility for hosting national ski events.²⁶

The Dominion Championships, 1936

The great event of the 1936 ski season was the Dominion Ski Championships, which were for the first time, hosted by the Toronto Ski Club. The C.A.S.A. also held its annual meeting in the city prior to the competitions, and this enabled many of the newly formed ski clubs in Ontario to send delegates. Ideal snow and weather conditions saw close to six thousand spectators gather at the Thorncliffe site to watch more than forty competitors, representing fifteen ski clubs, contest the jumping championships, which were won by Percy Bott of Montreal.

The following morning "some two thousand competitors, officials, skiers and spectators boarded two special trains to Flesherton".²⁷ Trucks met the delegation at the station, transporting them to Eugenia, the site for the remaining ski events. The cross country race, "laid out in a cloverleaf pattern", got underway on time and, "was won by A. Beck of Sudbury with a time of 1:05.6"²⁸ The downhill race started just after lunch,

²⁶ Canadian Amateur Ski Association, Minutes of the Eleventh Annual Meeting, Canadian Skiing, (Toronto: 1931), p. 15.

²⁷ "The Dominion Championships", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935-1936), p. 122.

²⁸ Ibid.

followed by the slalom race.²⁹ Ross Sommerfelt of the Viking Ski Club won the downhill, and Doug Mann, of Toronto, the slalom. This was the first Dominion Tournament, sanctioned by the C.A.S.A., to include these two alpine events, as well as the traditional cross country and jumping.

A Representative National Ski Championship, 1937

The seventeenth Annual Dominion Championship was considered by many to have been the first representative ski meet and the first real national Championship in Canada. It was also regarded as somewhat of an international event, with "Eastern and Western men fighting for honours against stars of international fame from the United States, Switzerland and Norway".³⁰ The setting for the event was distinctly Western, as the Mount Norquay ski lodge was appropriately surrounded by gaily decorated Indian teepees, complete with Indians from the Stoney Indian Tribe. "It was", according to one competitor, "an unforgettable scene, which greeted those fortunate enough to attend the Dominion Ski Championship of 1937".³¹

Among the winners of that meet were some of the top international skiers of the day, most of whom, interestingly enough, participated in both nordic and alpine events. Although

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰D. Batchelor, "The Seventeenth Annual C.A.S.A. Championships", Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1937-1938), p. 15.

³¹Statement, Melvin Sjolie, Personal Interview, Camrose, Alberta, July 1967.

no four-way championship was awarded, "there was no doubt", said Batchelor, "that the champion of champions was Sverre Kolterud of Norway".³² He had placed second in jumping and cross country, first in nordic combined, sixth in the slalom, fourth in the downhill and sixth in the alpine combined. Pierre Francioli, of Switzerland, was the outstanding alpine skier, as he won both the slalom and downhill events, with Louis Cochand of St. Margarets in Quebec, being the only Canadian to place near the leaders. Howard Chivers, of Dartmouth, won the cross country race with L. Tulkka, of Huntsville, Ontario, being the top Canadian, finishing fifth. Alf Engen, of Salt Lake City, Utah, won the jumping in an upset victory over Sverre Kolterud, "with a top jump of 208 feet".³³ A strong contingent of Canadian jumpers finished close to the winners, and they were led by Vancouver's Tom Mobraaten, in third place, followed by Karl Baadsvik, N. Kaldahl, Punch Bott and J. Nordmoe. A Western Canadian Ladies' Championship had also been tentatively planned as part of the events of the day. It first had to be coordinated with the men's events so as not to disrupt the program. Grace Carter, of Tacoma, Washington, was declared the overall winner of the ladies' downhill and slalom, with Gladys Atkin and Agnes Hammond, of Banff, placing second and third. A small field of only nine lady contestants entered, due in part, to the lack of assurance from race

³²Batchelor, op. cit., p. 19.

³³Ibid.

officials that the events would even take place. The reigning Canadian Champion, Mrs. Peggy Mobraaten, was unable to race due to an injury sustained in a practice run. It was reported "that it would have been interesting indeed to see her skill matched against that of Miss Carter".³⁴

The Dominion Tournament of 1937 in Retrospect

The Banff meet, in retrospect, was considered by many to have been "the greatest unifying influence upon Canadian skiing", as for a number of years "a spirit of slight misunderstanding existed between Eastern and Western skiers".³⁵ Following the meet, the opinion expressed by competitors and officials was "that future Canadian Olympic teams should have the benefit of training at Canada's own alpine wonderland, adjacent to Banff".³⁶ The championship was brought to a fitting end with a banquet in the Mount Royal Hotel, followed by a dance in the Cascade Ballroom, at which time Fred Hall, President of the C.A.S.A., presented the trophies and awards to the winners. In the words of Sigurd Lockeberg, the Technical Chairman of the C.A.S.A. at the time, "the future of Banff, as the most important skiing centre in North America is assured".³⁷

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., p. 21.

³⁷Sigurd Lockeberg, "Reviewing the Season", Canadian Ski Yearbook (Montreal: 1937-1938), p. 29.

II CANADIAN SKIERS AT THE WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES

St. Moritz, Switzerland, 1928

Canadian skiers participated in their first Winter Olympics in 1928, along with the skiers of fifteen other nations, in an event that marked the first appearance of North American ski teams in the winter games. The extent of Canadian representation at the games had been somewhat restricted due to the lack of financial support from the Canadian Olympic Association. This fact severely limited the degree in which the ski association was able to support the selection and training of a representative ski team. Following rather lengthy negotiations with the Canadian Olympic Association, a small team of Leonard Lehan, Gerald Dupuis, Merritt Putnam, and William B. Thompson sailed for Europe on January 22, 1928.³⁸

On their arrival in Europe, contact was established with Mr. Alex Keiller, who was in charge of the British Ski Team, and who had agreed to assist the Canadian team. The Canadians found themselves faced with the problem of having only three days in which to become familiar with European competitive conditions and to acquire new equipment. According to Putnam, they had arrived at the games "both ill-equipped and poorly prepared,"³⁹ as only a brief training program had

³⁸"The President's Report", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1927-1928), p. 18.

³⁹M. G. Putnam, "My Experiences at the Olympic Games", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1927-1928).

been initiated in Ottawa prior to their departure.

In ski jumping, it was the steep landing hill which presented several problems to the Canadians. Most of the competitors, it seems, had difficulty in getting forward in the air, and as a result, their performance suffered. "The exception to this", said Putnam, "was the Norwegians who used the jackknife style of bending forward from the hips".⁴⁰ Prior to the actual jump competition, the top Canadian jumper, Leonard Lehan, was forced to withdraw due to an injury received in one of the practice sessions. It was Gerald Dupuis, of the Ottawa Ski Club, who, according to Alex Keiller, "jumped magnificently, and was sixteenth out of thirty-six competitors".⁴¹

In the cross country race, the Canadians were again confronted with the importance of modern equipment, technique and proper ski wax. European skiers had, over the years, gained through experience a high degree of skill in waxing, which was considered a basic pre-requisite to a successful cross country racing. On their return to Canada, the team expressed their views, and it was generally agreed that North Americans would have to improve in every aspect of competitive skiing if they were to compete in the international field.⁴² Canadians in 1928, it seems, were not only faced with athletes of

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Letter from Alex Keiller to the Toronto Ski Club, The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1927-1928), p. 36.

⁴²Ibid.

superior skill and ability, but with problems of inadequate equipment and a lack of knowledge of, and about, modern competitive techniques. In spite of these shortcomings, and their relative inexperience in international cross country racing, W. B. Thompson, of the Red Birds Ski Club, placed thirty-seventh in the eighteen kilometre cross country race, and Merritt Putnam of the Toronto Ski Club, fortieth. These Olympic Games had been a great learning experience, the results of which were brought back to Canada.

Lake Placid, New York, 1932

Canada was represented by fifteen of its best skiers at the Third Winter Olympics, held at Lake Placid, New York, in 1932. In an effort to improve upon past performances, the C.A.S.A. appointed Sigurd Lockeberg as Canada's first Olympic ski coach. His task was outlined as being "to select, train and to accompany the team to the games, and to report back to the Ski Association".⁴³ The Canadian Olympic Association, it appeared, was only prepared to send a twelve-man team in skiing, offering to cover its expenses from Montreal to the Games and return to Montreal. The remaining costs were to be assumed by the governing body or by the clubs or skiers themselves. The Ski Association was determined to field a strong ski team despite the inadequate financial support that was available. After months of consultation, it was agreed that

⁴³S. R. Lockeberg, "Report on the Canadian Olympic Team", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1936), p. 8.

four skiers from the west and eight from the east would be selected for the Canadian Olympic Ski Team. The selection process became rather difficult, as a number of factors had to be considered other than performance. Lockeberg had expressed the belief that the best possible team would be picked to represent Canada "without fear or favour", and that they would place an emphasis on youth.⁴⁴ To this end, a two-week training camp was held at Lucerne in Quebec, where the Canadians were joined by the Swedish Olympic Team, from whom it was said that they learned a great deal.

At the games, four entries from Canada took part in the Special Jumping, Nordic Combined and eighteen kilometre cross country race, while three entered the fifty kilometre cross country. The overall results were encouraging, and the individual performances of several of the Canadians considered outstanding. Jostein Nordmoe of Camrose, Alberta, placed a remarkable tenth in the Nordic Combined, beating several of the top Europeans, while team-mate, Kaare Engstad, placed sixteenth in the gruelling fifty kilometre cross country race.⁴⁵ In addition to the athletic performances, it was also the first time that Canadian ski officials were to be honoured at an international competition. Sigurd Lockeberg, the Canadian manager-coach, was chosen to act as one of the official

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵"Olympic Results", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1932), p. 10.

judges at the special jumping events, and Louis Grimes was selected as one of the official distance markers. It was said of the Canadian team, "that they returned to Canada richer in experience and with an increased knowledge of skiing technique", which Lockeberg emphasized "would no doubt, have a beneficial effect on skiing here."⁴⁶

Plans for The 1936 Olympic Games

Plans for the Canadian ski team began well in advance of the 1936 Olympic Games, as for the first time the C.A.S.A. was prepared to provide the leadership in organizing and in sponsoring the team. To this end, "they had appointed a Canadian Olympic Ski Committee, whose specific task it would be to organize, select and finance, the Canadian representative at the Fourth Winter Olympics,"⁴⁷ scheduled for Garmisch, in Germany. The chairman of this committee was a former Olympian and member of the Redbird Ski Club, W. B. Thompson, who was assisted by H. P. Douglas. The financial problems became the responsibility of Mr. A. Sydney Dawes, with the remaining tasks left to C. E. Mortureux, S. R. Lockeberg, H. S. Johannsen, H. T. Cliff, David Orr and Kennington Hague.

As early as April of 1935 this committee had tentatively selected an eight-man team, but as the Games drew near, financial restrictions reduced the team to five. Due to this limitation,

⁴⁶Lockeberg, op. cit.

⁴⁷"Olympic Report", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935), p. 76.

they were forced to select all-around skiers who would provide depth and cover two or more events, rather than "specialists, who could compete in only one event".⁴⁸ The financial situation became so acute that just prior to departure each member of the team was required to contribute one hundred dollars towards the overseas fare, and A. H. Pangman accompanied the team as its manager, paying his own fare to and from the Games.

The 1936 Games were the first Olympics in which slalom and downhill events were included on the program. Also, for Canada, it was the first time that a women's ski team would represent this country in European International Competition. Four Canadian ladies, who were living in Europe at this time, had been granted permission to compete in the Olympic ski events as a Canadian Women's Team.⁴⁹

The Canadian Men's Olympic Team of 1936

Dressed in traditional Hudson Bay Blanket coats, the men's team left Montreal on January 3, 1936, and arrived in Europe a week before the Games were scheduled to begin. As before, the Canadians were soon made aware of their out-dated ski equipment, which again left them at a distinct disadvantage. As Pangman noted, "most of the jumpers used the modern Kandahar binding".⁵⁰ In the Alpine events, the Canadians found the

⁴⁸Statement, Dr. W. L. Ball, Ottawa, June 1967, Personal Interview.

⁴⁹A. H. Pangman, "Canada's 1936 Olympic Team", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1936), p. 26.

⁵⁰Ibid.

courses similar to what they had experienced in North America, but again they found themselves handicapped by inadequate equipment. The European skiers, at this time, used downhill skis that were fairly long and wide, and as Pangman said, "everyone had the benefit of downhill bindings".⁵¹ Fortunately, both skis and boots were reasonably priced and it was not long until the Canadian skiers were re-equipped. In the men's downhill, it was ski jumper Karl Baadsvik, who finished first among the Canadians, in twenty-sixth place. Birger Ruud, of Norway, won the event with a time of four minutes, forty-seven seconds. Bill Ball skied well for Canada until he suffered a fall, which placed him thirty-ninth, while Bud Clark, it was said, became entangled in a spruce tree near the start and placed forty-seventh.⁵² Over fifty thousand spectators witnessed the men's slalom, which was held on the same hill as the ladies', but over a more taxing course. The Canadian men suffered from the same problem as the ladies, in that they were not accustomed to tight gates set in unnatural patterns, which were common in Europe. Karl Baadsvik was again the top Canadian, followed by Bill Ball and Bud Clark. The Europeans had mastered what was referred to as the tempo turn, a technique that was well suited to the modern courses that were being used in Europe. Canadian slalom, at this time, was characterized by more wide-open courses set to complement the natural terrain and obstacles that

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Statement, Dr. W. L. Ball, Ottawa, June 1967, Personal Interview.

were to be found on the hill. The tempo turn was a competitive ski technique in which the turn was initiated by upper-body movements, while the skis were skidded in the desired direction. With this technique, which according to Pangman, was far superior to what was currently being practiced in Canada, "all the jerks and visible weighting of the skis was absent", and the turns appeared smooth and effortless.⁵³ Bill Ball, writing of the team's experiences at the Olympics, said "that Canadian skiing had fallen seriously behind that of Europe". Alpine skiing in particular, he felt, had changed drastically, and it was no longer a case of just sliding down a slalom course, which he said "was a rather common occurrence in Canada".⁵⁴ Before a reported crowd of one hundred and fifty thousand people, the Scandinavians, as expected, dominated the special jumping event. Birger Ruud, of Norway, won the gold medal over his arch rival, Bengt Eriickson of Sweden. Tom Mobraaten emerged as the top Canadian, finishing fourteenth, primarily on the strength of his first jump of seventy-one and a half metres. Karl Baadsvik followed in twentieth place and Verne Gagne, with only three days practice, managed a respectable thirty-eighth placing. The Nordic Combined event was completely dominated by the Norwegians, as three team-mates, Hagen, Hoffsbakken and Brodahl, won all three medals. Canada, with only a strong

⁵³Pangman, op. cit.

⁵⁴W. L. Ball, "The Red Birds Influence Canadian Skiing", Unpublished Paper, Ottawa, 1963.

showing in the combined jumping, registered some rather poor times in the cross country, and finished well back of the leaders. The eighteen kilometre cross country race was not considered to be one of Canada's strong events, as it was won by K. Larson of Sweden, with Bud Clark of Canada finishing forty-eighth.⁵⁵ With the exception of Clark, none of the remaining entries from Canada was considered to be specialists in cross country, but rather combined ski men. Bill Ball finished fifty-fifth, Tom Mobraaten fifty-eighth, and Karl Baadsvik sixty-fourth, as they found themselves outclassed in ski technique as well as in that vital aspect of physical conditioning. "The Canadians", it was said, with respect to cross country, "did not use their arms to the same extent as their European counterparts, who skied smoothly and rhythmically, utilizing both arm and leg action to produce a strong glide".⁵⁶

The Canadian Women's Olympic Team of 1936

The Canadian women's team, under the direction of its Captain, Mrs. Lois Butler, had begun its training early in the winter in the resort town of Grindelwald, Switzerland. At the Olympics, they performed extremely well in spite of the fact that each of them had been injured and were at various stages of recovery when their events were held. In the downhill competition Mrs. Butler was only one minute behind the winner

⁵⁵Pangman, op. cit., p. 32.

⁵⁶Ibid.

but still placed seventeenth, while Mrs. Chauvier, with a badly swollen ankle, placed twenty-fifth. Miss Miller placed a cautious twenty-eighth, while Mrs. Gordon Lennox, with one arm strapped to her body, finished in thirty-first place. The women's slalom, which attracted thirty thousand spectators, was held on a course that was about a third of a mile long with several fast gates set in difficult combinations. In spite of a concern for the rather icy conditions, Mrs. Butler successfully completed two steady runs to place nineteenth. The others to follow were Mrs. Gordon Lennox, twenty-eighth, Miss Miller, twenty-ninth, and Mrs. Charmier, thirty-first.⁵⁷

An Evaluation of Canada at the 1936 Olympics

The Canadian skiers brought back no championships but did return home with a wealth of knowledge regarding competitive skiing. "We learned a lot", said Pangman of the experience gained at the Games, which in his opinion, included "a tremendous amount about downhill and slalom skiing".⁵⁸ When they returned, the Olympic skiers brought back a new and revolutionary approach to alpine ski racing, so far unknown in Canada. In retrospect the entire team agreed that it was the younger ski racers in North America who would benefit most from the lessons learned in Europe. To compete with the rest of the world, Canada they said, would have to adopt and become familiar with

⁵⁷Lois Butler, Canada 1936 Olympic Women's Ski Team", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1936), p. 34.

⁵⁸Pangman, op. cit.

the most recent competitive ski developments, especially with respect to technique and equipment, and all future Canadian Olympic skiers would have to be subjected to a strenuous year-around training program. Competitive skiing in Canada was, in 1936 and even in 1940, far below the standard that was being achieved in Europe. The results of the fourth Winter Olympics served only to emphasize this fact and indicated the need for a stronger organization through which the international aspects of the sport could develop.

CHAPTER XIII

INTER-COLLEGIATE SKIING

I MCGILL AND DARTMOUTH

McGill University, 1907

McGill University has provided the background for much of Canada's sports' history, both before and after 1900. A sporting, as well as an academic institution, the university has played a major role in the early development of Canadian sports, such as football, basketball, track and hockey.

"Sports were popular among the students, faculty and alumni", according to Dr. W. L. Ball, "and a nucleus of a university ski club existed as far back as 1907".¹

Dartmouth College and McGill, 1913

The arrival at Dartmouth College in the United States of Fred H. Harris did much to influence winter sports at the college level in North America. He is credited with introducing shorter skis to the Dartmouth skiers, who in turn brought them to McGill during their frequent races and ski competitions. It was around 1910 that Harris organized the Dartmouth Outing Club.² This club shared with McGill many of the early collegiate skiing honours. Reference is made to an intercollegiate cross country competition between Dartmouth

¹Statement, Dr. W. L. Ball, Ottawa, June, 1967, Personal Interview.

²C. H. Proctor, "Skiing in North America", Skiing the International Sport, Roland Palmedo, ed., (The Derrydale Press, New York, 1937), p. 59.

College and McGill, reportedly held at Shawbridge, Quebec, in 1913. This race was generally considered to have been the first inter-collegiate ski competition in North America. Charles Proctor, of Dartmouth, points out that this "was solely an inter-collegiate affair", and from this first ski meeting "a great and lasting friendship was formed between these two institutions".³ Until 1915, when the Dartmouth Winter Carnival began, inter-collegiate ski meets were rather informal affairs. During these years and through their annual ski exchanges the sport developed into one demanding full inter-collegiate status. Many new ideas and novel innovations were introduced that later made the inter-collegiate ski events somewhat unique in the world.⁴

A Ski Club at McGill in 1914

It was a student newspaper, The McGill Daily, that called a meeting on January 13, 1914, to investigate the possibility of forming a ski club. "Their prime purpose", it reported, "was to form a club to compete in ski competitions".⁵ Dr. W. L. Ball relates that "the chairman of this meeting was Mr. Eric Reddy", who announced to those assembled that "if McGill can provide a team strong enough, Dartmouth College is willing to hold a cross country race and jumping meet".⁶

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 60.

⁵The McGill Daily, January 13, 1914, p. 6.

⁶W. L. Ball, "Early McGill Skiing", History of a Ski Club, Unpublished manuscript, Ottawa, 1963.

Following the acceptance of this proposal by the organizing committee, the McGill Ski Club was officially formed as an affiliate of the Montreal Ski Club in 1914. The new ski club proudly boasted twenty-five initial members, headed by president elect, Norm Williamson, and secretary, Lee Strathy. One of the first official appearances of this new club was in the inaugural Mount Royal Cross Country Ski race held on January 17, 1914. Here, it was reported, "several members of the McGill Ski Club took part".⁷

Inter-Collegiate Ski Competitions

With a ski club established at McGill in 1914, a formal challenge was soon issued to compete against Dartmouth. The next step, said Ball, "was to arrange the field of battle".⁸ It was agreed that the challenge would be met in two stages. The first contest was held at Hanover, New Hampshire, hosted by Dartmouth College. Little is recorded of this first meeting, except that Dartmouth won the competitive events handily. The second half of the competition took place in Montreal, and The Montreal Gazette, of February 14, 1914, carried an extensive review of the historic meeting. The jumping events were held on the famous "Cote des Neiges Ski Jump" in the centre of the city. McGill won that event with what was described as a

⁷Douglas, op. cit., p. 21.

⁸Proctor, op. cit., p. 60.

"magnificent effort" by Lee Strathy, "who leaped sixty-two feet".⁹ The cross country race was run the following day over the Shawbridge course, with "Strathy, Hague, Williamson and Thompson" representing McGill. Dartmouth managed to "turn the tables on McGill" as, according to one source, "they won the cross country by a narrow margin".¹⁰

Early Collegiate Ski Events

The events in inter-collegiate skiing varied a great deal from what was considered the traditional ski competition of the time. However, in these early years, competition at most college meets centred around ski jumping, which was the event that seemed to excite both spectators and contestants. The standard of jumping was generally good, but well below the existing standard of the nation's best.¹¹ In Canada and the United States, at this time, many of the top amateur jumpers were considered semi-professional, as they toured the continent, putting on their ski demonstrations for a substantial fee. The collegiate skiers used hills that would produce jumps of from fifty to one hundred feet, while the nation's top ski jumpers, at this time, were "soaring well over two hundred".¹²

⁹The Montreal Gazette, February 14, 1914, p. 8.

¹⁰Ball, op. cit., p. 3.

¹¹Statement, Dr. W. L. Ball, Ottawa, June 1967, Personal Interview.

¹²Proctor, op. cit., p. 61.

Professor Proctor, of Dartmouth, describes some of the other ski events that were part of these early inter-collegiate ski competitions. He points out that at most meets "there was a cross country race, two ski dashes, a relay race and a semi-comic obstacle race".¹³ The cross country race initially ranged in length from three to four miles, but it was later lengthened to between five and seven miles. Most amateur races in Canada at this time, were from nine to ten miles, which corresponded closely to the traditional short, cross country race, common in Scandinavia. The inter-collegiate dash events on skis were purely a North American innovation and usually extended over a distance of 220 or 440 yards. It is interesting to note that it was among the collegiate skiers that the sport first broke away from its Scandinavian orientation, which characterized most competitions on this continent. One authority writes: "We first started to get a little away from the Norwegian influence, with the introduction of skiing in the colleges."¹⁴ He credits the background and early development to the Norwegians, but in school competitions it was the non-Scandinavians who began to take an active role in organizing the events.

Proficiency Tests in College Skiing, 1916

The introduction of a proficiency ski test took place

¹³Proctor, op. cit., p. 61.

¹⁴Ibid.

in 1916 as a scored event in collegiate ski meets. The test consisted of two separate christiania turns, to a stop; one to the right and one to the left. This was followed by two telemark turns, an "S" turn of linked telemarks or christianias and sometimes a snowplow. "All these were judged on form", says Proctor, "as definite limits were marked as to where the turns could be made".¹⁵ The best form was considered to be one with very erect body, feet close together, knees slightly flexed, one foot a bit in advance of the other and hands at the sides. Competitors were allowed to carry poles, but they could not touch the snow for either balance or any other aid. As a result, most of the competitors discarded their ski poles for this particular competition.

Equipment popular at this time among the college skiers would seem incredible to modern advocates of the sport. Athletes in these college meets used the same skis for all events. Wooden skis were usually made from ash, and poles when they were used, were large and cumbersome. Their boots were either mocassins with flexible, leather soles, or heavy outdoor boots with rounded toes. The most popular binding was a modified Huitfelt model, "and it was not until around 1915 or 1916", says Proctor, "that the college skiers took to special hickory jumping skis". As late as 1921, only a few had managed to obtain the proper cross country racing skis, and most of

¹⁵Ibid.

them still had "very poor boots and bindings".¹⁶

II INTER-COLLEGIATE SKI ORGANIZATIONS

Inter-Collegiate Ski Association, 1921

After 1915, the Dartmouth Winter Carnival became an annual event, and shortly thereafter other universities and colleges were invited to take part, including McGill and New Hampshire. "This", according to Proctor, "made it truly an inter-collegiate competition".¹⁷ Interest in skiing was developing rapidly among other New England schools, as new ski clubs were being formed. More students were attracted to skiing's competitive events and their entries began to appear in other amateur ski meets. Among the more prominent schools were Williams, Colgate, Vermont, Massachusetts State College, Colby, Middleburg and Ottawa.¹⁸ Competitions were not held on a regular basis, and most were rather hastily arranged. The first great war disrupted organized college skiing and prevented development beyond this level.

Prompted by their earlier success and experience, inter-collegiate skiing was revived in 1919, again through the efforts of McGill and Dartmouth. At this point, the sport had grown to such an extent that an improved organization was required to adequately govern the ski competitions. A formal College Ski

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

Association appeared to be the answer, as it was said they could then better regulate the ever-increasing number of competitions among the colleges. These events culminated in the formation of the Inter-Collegiate Ski Association in 1921.¹⁹ This group inherited the task of promoting competitive skiing among the colleges and schools of North America. Charter members of this new group were listed as "Dartmouth, McGill, University of Vermont, Middleburg and Williams College".²⁰

In 1923 the need for a better organized body and a closer-knit association resulted in the formation of the Inter-Collegiate Winter Sports Union. Since other winter sports, such as skating and snowshoeing, were at this time part of these early carnival meets, the responsibilities of the group were extended to these sports as well. The executive committee of this re-organized group included Prof. C. A. Proctor of Dartmouth, Lt. Col. W. Bovey of McGill and Prof. C. R. Thompson, representing Bates College in the U.S.A. A ski coach at Dartmouth, Col. Anton A. Dettrich, was also instrumental in the formation of the ski union and in advocating changes in the rules and in the ski events.

Changes in the Ski Events, 1924

Among the many changes to be brought about by the Winter Sports Union was that speed and figure skating would be

¹⁹Statement, W. L. Ball, Ottawa, June 1967, Personal Interview.

²⁰Proctor, op. cit., p. 60.

included in the carnivals as scored events. A downhill ski race was to be added and slalom skiing was to be included as part of the proficiency test. The short dashes or sprint events would be discontinued. These changes resulted in the earliest introduction of formal downhill and slalom races in Eastern Canada. A primitive form of slalom race was held at the Dartmouth Winter Carnival in 1925 on a hill with less than a hundred foot vertical drop. It was recalled that "only eight or nine pairs of markers, made from pine branches",²¹ were required to mark the course. The style or form adopted by the skier, was not considered part of any of the ski events, with the exception of the proficiency test. Proctor, himself a competitor in the slalom, speaks of his performance, saying; "When my turn came I ran at the start, skated around half the turns and poled hard".²² The object of the slalom and other races, then as now, was to get to the finish line as fast as possible.

Skiing, by this time in the colleges, had developed certain accepted forms of style and techniques which were considered to be desirable. This idea of style extended even to the racing events, though racers were often forced to disregard what was considered good style. "To win", it was said, "they would often ski in a low crouch with the feet wide apart",²³

²¹Ibid., p. 62.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

both unforgivable at the time.

The Nordic Combined event of jumping and cross country was first included in collegiate meets in 1932.²⁴ This classical event, traditionally part of skiing in Norway, combined the results of the two events for the best two-way score. In most races, at this time, international rules for the ski events were adopted, and the cross country race was lengthened to eighteen kilometres.

Inter-Collegiate Ski Union, 1934

The years 1932-1939 saw great interest develop in collegiate skiing across the country. Again, the organization governing college skiing had to be streamlined to meet the needs of the sport. Skiing had become the dominant feature of the winter carnivals, and it was felt that it would perhaps develop better on its own. Skating and snowshoeing, it was suggested, would be better served if they formed their own organizations. Therefore, in 1934, the Inter-collegiate Ski Union was formed. The method of scoring the meets was revised to prevent "a few strong skiers" from dominating the events. Up until this time the ski meets were scored on a 5-3-2-1 basis, similar to track and field meets.²⁵ It was McGill which suggested the adoption of a team scoring system, similar to that which was tried successfully in the Oxford-Cambridge ski exchanges.

²⁴Ball, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁵Proctor, op. cit., p. 63.

III DEVELOPMENTS IN CANADA

First Canadian University Ski Meet, 1934

Until 1932 inter-collegiate skiing among Canadian universities had been restricted to isolated recreational encounters, arranged on short notice. It became apparent that sufficient interest had developed among the colleges in Ontario and Quebec, and the first All-Canadian University Ski Meet took place at the Seignory Club on January 30, 1934. "College teams representing McGill University, Toronto Varsity, Queen's University, and St. Patrick's College of Ottawa, took part in this first Canadian ski meet.²⁶ The events to be contested included downhill, slalom, jumping and cross country. This first meet was held in conjunction with an existing inter-city ski competition between the clubs of Ottawa and Montreal.

St. Patrick's College of Ottawa, with an outstanding performance from Bud Clark, a member of Canada's Olympic Team in 1932, won the first Canadian College Ski Championship with 28 points. "Clark led the St. Pat's team", it was written, "with a win in the cross country, and a second and third in downhill and jumping".²⁷ In the overall team standing, Queen's University of Kingston took second place, with twelve and one half points, with McGill, third, with ten. The surprise of the meet was perhaps the strong showing of the Queen's University

²⁶"The First Canadian University Ski Meet", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1934), p. 35.

²⁷Ibid.

team, led by what was described as, "the expert skiing of Ed Connolly".²⁸ Connolly won both the slalom and downhill events, which helped to make Queen's initial venture into university skiing competitions somewhat successful.

IV COMPETITIVE SKIING IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Schoolboy Skiing Develops in Ski Clubs

Skiing, as a school-sanctioned sport, developed rather slowly in Canada. In most areas, it was the ski club which sponsored events exclusive to schools and to school age children. Though these events were by no means discouraged by school authorities, in most areas they received little active support.

As early as 1922, the club de Ski Mont-Royal D'Amerique, held a two-mile cross country race for French Canadian school-boys. A school ski club was formed at Mont St. Louis College in 1924, and through the leadership of Mr. Claude Beaubien, scholastic events were held frequently in Quebec City.²⁹ The Cliffside Ski Club, in Ottawa, was said to have held inter-scholastic events for boys and girls in 1924. At St. Andrew's College, in Toronto, a junior boys' cross country race was held in 1926 for students attending the school.³⁰

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Report of the Club de Ski Mont Royal D'Amerique, The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1930), p. 32.

³⁰Ibid.

Interscholastic Skiing Established in Montreal, 1934

Inter-school ski competition among the high schools of Montreal began on an organized basis in 1934. Under the auspices of the famed Red Bird's Ski Club, the first meet was held at Shawbridge on January 19 of that year. The meet was open to "all schools on the Island of Montreal" and, at that first meet, nine schools were represented, with a total of sixty-eight competitors. Westmount High School, led by Dick Ball, won the team title at the meet, with fifteen points, followed closely by "West Hill High School, with thirteen points; Montreal High School with nine points; Lower Canada College with seven points".³¹

The four competitive events of jumping, cross country, slalom and downhill were contested, and each school was allowed to enter **four** skiers in each event. Mr. W. B. Converse, Honorary President of the Red Birds' Club, donated a perpetual trophy in the form of a silver plaque to be awarded annually to the championship team. Percy Bott, of Montreal High School, was considered the individual winner, as he placed first in jumping; and third in both the downhill and slalom. Dick Ball, of Westmount, placed second in the individual all-around, with a victory in the downhill and a third in the cross country. Other notable competitors were "the Moore brothers from West Hill High", who surprised observers "by leading their team to a win in the slalom event".³²

³¹"The Interscholastics at Shawbridge", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1934), p. 47.

³²Ibid.

CHAPTER XIV

COMPETITIVE ALPINE SKIING IN CANADA

I ITS EARLY EVOLUTION

Alpine vs. Nordic

Competitive skiing in Canada evolved from what was a distinctly nordic orientation of jumping and cross country to include the modern hill skiing events of slalom and downhill. Primarily through the efforts of such governing authorities as the Federation Internationale de Ski, the sport of skiing was rapidly becoming international in scope. In Canada, many clubs, individuals and agencies have contributed to the development of the four basic competitive ski events that we see practiced today. Of these, it is likely that the most important has been the Canadian Amateur Ski Association. It has, either directly or indirectly, influenced almost every aspect of what we think of today as the sport of competitive skiing. By 1939, the traditional cross country and jumping events were gradually being supplemented by the emerging alpine skiing disciplines. Within the structure of the ski association many other organizations were able to influence and bring about favourable changes in the sport. In Canada, foremost among these was perhaps the North American Collegiate Ski Competitions, which took place during the 1930 decade. Prior to this, the original European concepts, related to competitive skiing, had

been readily accepted by the college skiers of this continent. These inter-collegiate organizations, and in particular, McGill University and the Red Birds Ski Club, were instrumental in the development and practice of new ski techniques in Canada. By 1940, the universal acceptance of hill skiing, in areas in which it had been introduced, was perhaps an indication of a post-war era, that would see slalom and downhill supercede cross country and jumping as the premier ski events.

Slalom Racing, an F.I.S. Event, 1928

Competitive alpine skiing made a significant step forward, when in 1928, the F.I.S. congress adopted slalom racing as an official event. Even though it was on an experimental basis only, its wide popularity in Europe, and to a lesser extent in North America, assured its future acceptance by all ski countries of the world. Sir Arnold Lunn, of Great Britain, had for years been heralding this event "as the greatest step forward in the history of competitive skiing".¹ With this formal recognition by the world's governing authority, slalom soon became popular in Canada and was included in most club programs.

Slalom Racing in Canada

The Montreal Ski Club was one of the first Canadian ski organizations to officially adopt slalom as an official

¹Arnold Lunn, A History of Skiing, (London: The Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 10.

event in 1928. It was about the same time that the North American-based Inter-Collegiate Ski Union also adopted it in its program. Forms of slalom racing were also being practiced in several of the western ski areas, especially around Banff and Vancouver. By 1930 slalom, and its recreational counterpart - hill skiing, had been widely accepted in Canada. It was practiced by clubs throughout the east and the west, with club and regional competitions being staged on a regular basis. The translation into English of the rules of international skiing, by Mr. Alex Keiller of Great Britain, greatly assisted in extending the appreciation of slalom in North America. Extracts relating to slalom and downhill were included in British ski journals and yearbooks and subsequently were reprinted in many Canadian ski publications.

In reflecting on Canadian competitive skiing, Dr. W. L. Ball of Ottawa points out that prior to 1927 "we had only cross country racing, jumping, touring, and the ancestor of present slalom racing, a proficiency test".² Since the turn of the century, a series of events appear to have influenced competitive alpine skiing in Canada. Among the first of these was perhaps the activity of the skiers from McGill University and Dartmouth College in the United States.

²W. L. Ball, "The Evolution of Canadian Skiing", The Canadian Sport Monthly, 1959, p. 16.

II THE EMERGENCE OF ALPINE SKI EVENTS

Slalom at the Inter-collegiate Winter Carnivals

The city of Montreal was the site of the inter-collegiate winter carnival in 1927, with McGill University acting as host. In addition to the usual cross country and ski jump events, a downhill race and judged proficiency test were held on the slopes of Mount Royal.³ The proficiency test had become a somewhat unsuccessful attempt to encourage style among the college racers. The following year, in 1928, at Lake Placid, New York, what has been considered the first official slalom race was held as part of the inter-collegiate ski competition. That same year, in Canada, Herman Smith Johannsen is credited with setting the first modern slalom course on Hill 70 at St. Saveur. Ball describes the course as "being set on breakable crust, and marked with spruce boughs".⁴

The Dominion Slalom in 1929

Many of the early exponents of slalom skiing in Canada come from the ranks of the university skiers. Clubs such as the Red Birds, a graduate ski club of McGill University, were at the forefront in promoting these new aspects and techniques brought about by alpine ski racing. "In those days we skied as a group", said Ball, "and as we developed a new idea, it was

³Statement, Dr. W. L. Ball, Ottawa, June 1967, Personal Interview.

⁴Ball, op. cit., p. 17.

tested by the others". "From these rather informal training and practice sessions", he recalled, "a fair technique evolved".⁵ It was the same Red Birds Ski Club, which hosted an event classed as the first Dominion Slalom Championship in 1929. The course was set on the Big Hill at Shawbridge, and was won by a visiting Austrian, Harold Paumgarten. During the course of the competition "he displayed a superior skiing technique, to win handily over his Canadian rivals".⁶

The Oxford-Cambridge Ski Challenge, 1931

The decision of British ski officials to hold the annual Oxford-Cambridge Ski Meet in Canada, during 1931, was to be the first of several Pan-Atlantic ski exchanges. Switzerland had for years been the traditional site chosen, and as a result of these frequent continental ski experiences, the British students were experienced ski racers. They brought with them the latest in alpine ski equipment, ideas and theory on the best downhill and slalom techniques. The somewhat generally held belief that steel edges were not suited to Canada "was soon to be shattered",⁷ as the visitors apparently demonstrated both a superiority in equipment, as well as in style. Besides their controversial skis with steel edges, "they used Amstutz

⁵W. L. Ball, "History of a Ski Club", Unpublished Manuscript, Ottawa, Canada, 1963.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Statement, W. L. Ball, Ottawa, June 1967, Personal Interview.

springs, attached to the skis and the ankle, which kept the heel of the boot fixed to the ski".⁸ Only in the cross country event was McGill able to compete with the visitors, although in the eventual cross country competition the margin of victory that went to the British was considered close.

The International College Ski Meet, 1933

Over the Christmas holidays in 1932, McGill skiers journeyed to Europe to repay the British for their recent visit to Canada. They had been invited to take part in the Oxford-Cambridge College Meet, scheduled for St. Mortiz early in the new year. The Canadians arrived at the site after a long journey by boat, rail, truck and bus, to what was described as a "tumultuous welcome", complete with "roman candles, torches, firecrackers and a brass band". It was considered "the greatest reception any of us had ever had".⁹

The first race for the Canadians on the continent was listed as the British Open Cross Country Championships, scheduled for December 31, just seven days after their arrival. This race, a tough eighteen kilometre event, was won by Frank Campbell of the Red Birds, with the other Canadians close behind. The much heralded slalom and downhill events began on January 4 at Corniglia, a site 2,500 feet above St. Moritz. The

⁸Ibid.

⁹W. L. Ball, "The McGill-Redbird Ski Trip to Switzerland", Unpublished Paper, Ottawa, 1963, p. 9.

course was expertly set by Dr. Walter Amstutz of Murren, one of the early pioneers of alpine skiing in Europe. It was "Campbell of McGill, who again led the field", with two flawless runs, "Green and Taylor of Cambridge were second and third", and "Jack Houghton of Canada, fourth".¹⁰

Team victory in the slalom went to the British schools, but the margin had been greatly reduced from that of the previous year. Only two Canadians entered the downhill, with Harry Pangman placing fourth and George Jost, eleventh. The Canadian team, it was said, "was preserving its strength for the cross country events,"¹¹ which were to be run as part of a larger International European University Meet. This event, held on January 6, was won by Thorleif Saxhaug of Norway, with Harry Pangman, of Canada, placing fourth. McGill University won the team cross country title, but lost the dual meet to the British by the narrowest of margins, "98.16 to 98.00".¹²

The remainder of the International Intercollegiate Meet followed, with university teams representing Cambridge, Turin, Milan, Norway, Switzerland, Austria, Germany and Yugoslavia entered, along with McGill from Canada. No one from Canada took part in the jumping, but in the slalom, George Jost and Harry Pangman placed sixth and seventh, respectively. The Canadians were outclassed in the alpine events, but the final event was

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

a somewhat unique relay race that was well suited to the Canadian "bushwacking style of skiing".¹³ Headlines in the Swiss Press, following the meet, proclaimed the relay victory saying; "Tall Broad Shouldered Canadians Sweep Relay Race".¹⁴ Canada's winning team was captained by Jack Houghton and included Bill Ball, Frank Campbell, Harry Pangman and George Jost.

A History of the Quebec Kandahar

The history of the Quebec Kandahar Competition goes back to 1911, when British ski enthusiast, Lord Roberts of Kandahar, donated a challenge cup for winter sports competition. However, it was not until 1924 that the Kandahar Ski Club was founded at Murren, Switzerland, again by a group of British Continental skiers, who in 1928, sponsored the first Arlberg Kandahar Ski Race.¹⁵ In the years that followed, the Kandahar Ski Club, in an effort to promote alpine skiing, initiated a policy of donating cups and charters to prominent ski countries of the world, entrusting them with the honour of holding races under the Kandahar banner. Canada, in 1932, was the second country to be granted a Kandahar charter by the original club,

¹³Statement, W. L. Ball, Unpublished paper, Ottawa, 1963, p. 4.

¹⁴W. L. Ball, "When McGill Beat Europe's Best", Canadian Sport Monthly, (Montreal: December, 1958), p. 10.

¹⁵W. L. Ball, "The Kandahar, a Race with a History", Canadian Sports Monthly, February 1951, p. 12.

based in Switzerland.

Captain Alan d'Eqville, a visitor from England, had been elected secretary of the Seignior Club in Montebello, Quebec, in 1929. He was himself an excellent skier and, as an advocate of slalom and downhill racing, had been one of the founders of the Kandahar Ski Club of Great Britain. He was instrumental in persuading the parent organization on the merits of promoting a similar event in Canada. In 1932, the Quebec Kandahar cup was presented to the Canadian Amateur Ski Association in the hopes of extending the popularity of slalom and downhill racing in North America. The Red Birds Ski Club, of Montreal, was requested by the C.A.S.A. to be in charge of the first competition, and Mont Tremblant was selected as the site. A committee approved by the C.A.S.A. to organize the event included "Alan d'Eqville, Herman Smith Johannsen, H. Percy Douglas, Sterling Maxwell, and Harry Pangman".¹⁶ In spite of the two previous informal races on the mountain, no trail clearing had since been attempted.¹⁷ "In those days", it was reported, "the trail was more or less non existent", and racers would pick their run course through the dense bush and unpacked snow.¹⁸

¹⁶W. L. Ball, The Quebec Kandahar, Unpublished Material, Ottawa, 1965.

¹⁷W. L. Ball, "Old Quebec Kandahars", Canadian Sport Monthly, February 1959, p. 19.

¹⁸W. L. Ball, "The Kandahar, A Race With a History", Canadian Sport Monthly, February, 1959, p. 61.

The First Canadian Kandahar, 1932

The rules of the Quebec Kandahar stipulated that the competition should be based on the combined results of a downhill and slalom race. On March 12, 1932, officials and racers skied in with the Kandahar Trophy to the Manoir Pinateau from Lac Mercier, in preparation for the historic race.

Early the next day "the famed Jack Rabbit, Johannsen" led a group of some thirty competitors to the starting point near the summit, "in a clearing just under the fire tower".¹⁹ The top half of the course was described as "having a slope of about thirty degrees, covered with spruce, balsam, rocks and windfall".²⁰ Competitors, starting at one minute intervals, were able to select their path on the upper half of the course. "It wasn't as bad as it looked", said Ball, who himself used "a series of short slides and long rolls to negotiate the tangle of natural obstacles".²¹ The lower half of the course was somewhat easier, since everyone followed the same trail unless a side excursion into the woods became necessary. Johannsen, reporting on the race, said "the run gave the competitors a splendid test in typical Canadian country".²² Along

¹⁹Ball, The Quebec Kandahar, Unpublished Material, Ottawa, 1965.

²⁰W. L. Ball, The Old Quebec Kandahar, Unpublished Material, Ottawa, 1965.

²¹W. L. Ball, op. cit.

²²"The Red Birds", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1932), p. 38.

the course were strewn many of the unfortunate competitors and bits of equipment, mitts, caps, broken poles and pieces of their skis. Somehow, everyone finished and all agreed "it has been a wonderful race now that it is over".²³ Harry Pangman, with his spectacular pole riding technique, crossed the finish line with a winning time in the downhill event of 15 minutes, 10 seconds. Peter Gillespie finished second, with George Jost, third. However, it was George Jost, with a victory in the slalom race, who was declared the combined champion and winner of the first Quebec Kandahar. He was awarded the trophy which, at the time, represented the ultimate in Canadian alpine skiing.

Highlights of the Quebec Kandahar

On March 13, 1933, a field of fifty-four gathered on the Summit to run the second annual Quebec Kandahar. Bill Ball won the slalom event and Peter Gillespie the downhill in a time of six minutes, fifty-three seconds, which along with his placing in the slalom, gave him the Kandahar trophy for that year. Credit for the trail clearing that took place prior to the 1934 season should go to a great benefactor of Canadian amateur sport, Sydney Dawes. He, along with George Barclay, collected the money that enabled extensive brush clearing and wood cutting to be carried out. These improvements were matched by the skiing ability of the contestants and future

²³Ball, op. cit.

years would see the race time reduced drastically. Ski jumpers also became attracted to the Kandahar as, in 1934, Art Gravel displayed his all-around skiing skill by winning the cup, followed by another champion jumper, Karl Baadsvik in 1935. Young Viateur Cousineau, a boy from St. Adele, won the race in 1936, in a much improved time of 3:31.4. This victory was a memorable one, since he reportedly used an old pair of used skis given to him by Gordon MacCormack which, they said, "were liberally laquered with fingernail polish".²⁴

During 1937 the meet was dominated by members of the visiting Swiss University team, led by Arnold Kaech, who won the cup by a narrow margin over the young Canadian, Viateur Cousineau and Dick Durrance of the U.S.A. Louis Cochand won the race in 1938 over Doug Morin. A chairlift was operating to the 1,200 foot level in 1939 and a new cut in the trail eliminated a slow section of the course at the junction of the Kandahar and Taschereau Trails. Ladies entered the competition in that year for the first time, and Pat Pare finished in 4:30, bettering the performance of at least fifteen of the men. A separate class of F.I.S. amateurs was included in the 1939 competition, won by the resident Swiss ski instructor, Heinz Von Allmen, past winner of the European Arlberg Kandahar, who was one of the many European skiers instructing in Canada.

Von Allmen's time of 3:02 was a new record for the

²⁴W. L. Ball, "The Kandahar, A Race With a History", Canadian Sports Monthly, February 1951, p. 12.

event and somewhat over-shadowed the amateur victory of Roger Trottier. In 1940 Chris Schwartzenback of New York won the combined events and the cup, with John Fripp of Ottawa winning the downhill. Louis Cochand, racing as an F.I.S. amateur, won that class in 1940 and, in the process equalled Von Allmen's record time. Doug Mann returned to win the combined title, in 1941, over strong opposition from Rolf Endre. Fripp, a F.I.S. amateur in 1941, broke the earlier records by completing the downhill course in 3:01 flat. Rolf Endre, in 1942, reversed the results of the previous year, winning the cup over Doug Morin, while Viateur Cousineau won the open F.I.S. amateur event. This was to be the last race until 1946, as all major competitions were cancelled due to the second great war.

The Swiss University Team Visits Canada in 1936

A Swiss University team visited Canada in the 1936-1937 ski season, and participated in several of the major Canadian ski events, including the Canadian Championships. "The seven Swiss racers", according to Hilles Pickens, "made it hot for our skiers that year", as only one Canadian "was able to hold his own over the powerful Swiss".²⁵ Louis Cochand of St. Marguerite, Quebec, had learned all his skiing in the Laurentians, and it was he who prevented a complete sweep by the Swiss visitors. Cochand captured third place in the downhill, just

²⁵Hilles Pickens, "Skiing Has Come a Long Way", Canadian Sports Monthly, (Montreal: November 1954), p. 8.

ten seconds behind Pierre Francoli, "the magnificent Swiss ace".²⁶ The superiority of the European skiers was so marked that it was alarming to Canadian racers and the skiing public. Excluding Cochand, one had to compare Francolis' winning downhill time of 1:45.8 with Dave Morin's 2:09.4 for seventh place, as he was the second Canadian to finish. In the slalom, the difference was even more apparent, as the smooth style of the Swiss was well suited to negotiating slalom gates. The Canadians used jerky steered turns with a great deal of checking above the gates, which greatly reduced their time. The winner was again Francoli in 2:26.8, with Cochand, the top Canadian, in fifth place with a slow 3:07.4. Karl Baadsvik was next in twelfth place, with a time of 3:55.3, which was a full minute and 20 seconds behind the winner.²⁷

A German University Ski Team Visits Canada in 1938

The visit to Canada of the German University Ski Team in 1938-39 was one of the competitive highlights of that year. They arrived in Ottawa and journeyed across Canada, skiing in centres from Montreal to Vancouver. Though they were somewhat disappointed in the Eastern downhill and slalom courses set for the Canadian championship, the cross country was regarded as "the finest ever seen".²⁸ In Banff they were welcomed by

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Karl Ringer, "Ski Heil to Canada", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1938), p. 59.

alpine terrain similar to Europe, and on viewing the downhill course on Mt. Norquay considered it so steep "that a straight shuss", a tactic popular in Europe, "was out of the question".²⁹

The impression left by the visiting Swiss, German and American skiers did a great deal to improve alpine skiing in Canada. Through their influence, Canadians learned the superiority of the modern European ski techniques. The traditional thinking regarding the proper technique for alpine skiing began to change rapidly, following the 1936 Olympics. Canadians, at that time, had come to realize the need and value of modern equipment, and the superior skiing techniques employed by the French, Austrians and Swiss.

III LADIES' ALPINE SKI RACING

Women's Slalom and Downhill, 1928

It was not until after 1928 that reports of slalom and downhill competitions for ladies appeared in the ski club records. The mountainous terrain near the city of Vancouver was perhaps the scene of many earlier attempts at informal slalom competitions. Most of the mountainous ski trails, in existence at the time, were unsuitable for a proper slalom course, and this somewhat hampered the development of the sport among the ladies. Trails on which men's events were held consisted of narrow, obstacle-covered courses "where only basic

²⁹Ibid., p. 61.

minimum of brush clearing had been done".³⁰ These were, in most cases, considered to be too hazardous for the ladies, and little encouragement was given to them to take part.

By 1935, ladies' slalom and downhill racing were becoming established, especially in the hill skiing centres of Vancouver and Banff, as well as in parts of the interior of British Columbia. Several exclusive ski clubs for women were active throughout Eastern Canada in the promotion of competitive alpine skiing.

The Penguins - Ski Club, 1932

The early attempts in Montreal at promoting ski racing among the ladies were a prelude to the formation of the Penguin Ski Club in 1932. The Penguins were a unique ski club, in that membership was exclusively feminine, and it became an organization devoted to the improvement of women's ski racing in Canada. One of the prime organizers was Miss Betty Sherrard who, with the assistance of Percy Douglas, did much of the work that brought the young club its early success. Through the efforts of these two individuals, a clubhouse was obtained in the village of St. Saveur, which enabled them to attract many new members to the club. The Duke of Luechtenburg, a qualified ski instructor from Europe, was engaged shortly after to teach new members the rudimentary skills of the sport. He was, at the time, one of the few practitioners in Canada of the revolu-

³⁰D. Bourdon, "Report of the Western Ski Clubs", The Canadian Ski Annual, (Montreal: 1928), p. 47.

tionary Arlberg technique, which he had learned in Austria. According to one source, "he was the first really qualified ski teacher in Canada".³¹

The Penguins, as they were referred to, joined the C.A.S.A. in 1935, and continued to pioneer the development of ladies' slalom and downhill. By now their influence had been extended to the national scene, and they became the authority for women's ski racing in Canada. One of their major club projects in these years was to host, organize and conduct ski meets for school age girls in the province. Speaking of these girls, Douglas said "I am exceedingly proud of my Penguins", and among the more prominent he listed "the McNichol sisters, (Helene, Francois, and Madeleine), Peggy Johannsen, the Pare sisters, Betty Maxwell, Barbara McTaggart, Gertrude Morin, Percival MacKenzie, Rhoda and Rhena Wurtele and Diana Gordon Lennox".³²

Other Competitive Clubs for the Ladies

Soon other clubs were formed with either an exclusive ladies' membership or a special ladies' section or branch as part of the older existing clubs. The Seigniory Ski Club, located at Montebello, Quebec, had a ladies' section, and was active in the promotion of ladies' skiing. Women's events were scheduled as part of the club program after 1930, and in 1933

³¹H. P. Douglas, My Skiing Years, (Montreal: Whitcombe and Gilmour Ltd., 1951), p. 4.

³²Ibid., p. 10.

special downhill races were listed exclusively for women.³³

In 1934, a team of four ladies from the Ski Club of Montreal was declared the winners of the Inter-city Trophy Competition. This event, sponsored by the Seignior Club, was first held in 1933, and was to become an annual competition for ladies' ski teams. The trophy was to be awarded to the team of four scoring the highest aggregate points in the combined events of slalom, downhill and a cross country relay race.³⁴ Included on that year's winning team were "Misses Alice MacFarlane, Dorothy Michaels, Emma Benning and Evelyn McKenna. A Toronto team of "J. Merrill, P. Zinkan, Mrs. F. Westman, and D. Slater", reportedly made, "a grand showing in the slalom race, taking first as well as third place".³⁵ A women's ski club was founded at McGill University in 1935, and appears to be the first such organization at a Canadian University. By 1937, ladies' competitive sections were active in most of the larger ski clubs in the east. Among the more prominent were the Ski Club of Montreal, the Ottawa Ski Club, Toronto Ski Club and the Park Toboggan and Ski Club, also of Montreal.³⁶

The Holt Wilson Trophy

It was not until 1935 that a National Ski Championship

³³"Seignior Club Plans", The Seignior, (The Seignior Club, Lucerne in Quebec, Vol. 4, No. 1, January 1933), p. 33.

³⁴"Seignior Sports", The Seignior, (The Seignior Club, Lucerne in Quebec) Vol. 8, No. 12, 1937), p. 10.

³⁵Ibid., p. 11.

³⁶Ibid.

for women was held, under the sanction of the Canadian Amateur Ski Association. That year, Sir Eric Holt Wilson, of England, offered a perpetual trophy to be awarded annually to the best woman skier in Canada. His keen interest and admiration for Canadian skiing was due in part to time spent in Canada and ski associations made in Ontario and Quebec. In a letter sent with the trophy to the president of the C.A.S.A., it stated; "Though I cannot actually claim to be a Canadian, I should very much like to mark my deep and humble admiration for Canada and of the C.A.S.A. in particular, by offering a small trophy for a perpetual annual award to the best all-around woman downhill and slalom runner...as judged by the officers of the Technical Board".³⁷ The existence of this award proved to be a great incentive to Canadian ski authorities, and helped to hasten their efforts towards sanctioning a National Ski Championship for ladies. This event had been spoken of for years, and now the time seemed appropriate for some concerted action. The handsome Holt Wilson trophy arrived early in 1935, suitably inscribed.

Holt Wilson Trophy
presented by the
Canadian Amateur Ski Association, 1935
by Sir Eric Holt Wilson CMG D.S.O.
President of the Ski Club of Great Britain
To be held by the Canadian Woman Adjudged
to be the Best Downhill and Slalom
Ski Runner 38

³⁷Letter to H. P. Douglas from Sir Eric Holt Wilson, published in the Canadian Ski Yearbook, 1935 edition, p. 73.

³⁸A. Shorey, E. Maxwell, "Ladies Skiing", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935), p. 44.

Holt Wilson Trophy Competitions

The task of organizing the first Holt Wilson Competition was delegated by the President of the C.A.S.A. to the Penguin Ski Club of St. Saveur, by now the leading women's ski club in Eastern Canada. Subsequently, on March 10, 1935, at Mont Tremblant, in conjunction with the Quebec Kandahar, the first national downhill and slalom race for women was held. Unfortunately, only skiers from Eastern Canada were able to attend, as the lady skiers on the West Coast found the costs of travelling too great. The competition was none-the-less successful and close, as Madeline McNichols managed a narrow victory over Peggy Johannsen and was declared the first winner of the Holt Wilson Trophy, and the Canadian Ladies' Championship.³⁹

In 1936 the meet was held in the West, with the task of organizing the competition delegated to the Vancouver Ski Zone. The ladies' competition was held over the weekend of April 10, at the same time as the British Columbia Ski Championships. Victory in the ladies' competition went to Miss Peggy Harlin of Vancouver, as she skied "wide open and without a fall" to win both slalom and downhill events and the Holt Wilson Trophy.⁴⁰ In second place was Gertrude Wepsala of the Vancouver Ski Club, and third was Gladys Atkin of the Banff Ski Runners. The

³⁹H. P. Douglas, "Holt Wilson Trophy Report", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1935), p. 73.

⁴⁰"The Vancouver Ski Zone Report", The Canadian Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1936), p. 53.

trophy competition of 1936 is reported to have aroused a great deal of interest among ladies in ski racing throughout the west. It was apparent that in the past few years the overall standard of women's skiing had improved as well.⁴¹

In keeping with the tradition already established in the first two years, the meet was awarded to the east in 1937. The small field of only twelve racers, made up primarily of "the best of the Montreal girls", were to be outclassed by Miss Elfrida Pembauer of Austria, a visitor to Canada. She easily won the women's downhill with a time of 1:33.7, over Peggy Johannsen (1:45.0). The same Miss Pembauer outclassed the slalom field with a remarkable 54.7 performance over her nearest rival, Dorothy Michaels of Montreal, with a time of 1:17.7. Miss Peggy Johannsen was awarded the Canadian title for the best combined times in slalom and downhill and, along with it, the Holt Wilson Trophy for 1937. Miss Pembauer was the first lady in Canada to demonstrate the racing superiority of the advanced European ski technique. The Canadian competitors relied solely on the slower steered turns, while Europeans were experimenting with high speed racing turns. The equipment available to most lady alpine racers had for years been a handicap in slalom or downhill. Around 1938, it was reported around Montreal, that "about thirty girls eagerly competed in downhill and slalom", and that among them it was becoming more

⁴¹Ibid.

common to see "the shorter and broader skis", which were, of course, more suited to alpine skiing.⁴²

In 1938, the Championship meet was held at Banff, Alberta, in the Rocky Mountains. Miss Gertrude Wepsala of the Tyee Ski Club emerged the winner, a feat she repeated again in the 1939 championship, at the Seignoir Club, in Montebello, Quebec. The meet returned to Banff in 1940, where Miss Dorothy Michaels of the Ski Club of Montreal won the Dominion Championship over the highly favoured contingent from Vancouver. Ladies' National Ski Competitions were interrupted by the Second Great War in 1941, and were not resumed until 1946.

⁴²Alice MacFarlane, "Observations on Girls' Competitive Skiing", Canada Ski Yearbook, (Montreal: 1937), p. 51.

CHAPTER XV

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Forms of skiing have been traced back as far as 5000 years, when it served such utilitarian purposes as locomotion in winter, as a means of hunting and in warfare. Skiing made a more recent appearance on the Canadian sporting scene, though it was not considered popular until after 1920. Though skiing was known to have been practiced as early as 1879 in Quebec, it was not considered a competitive sport until 1898 when, as part of the Rossland Winter Carnival, a prized ski jumping and ski running competition was held. In Eastern Canada, skiing did not appear as a competitive sport until 1904, when the Montreal Ski Club held an official ski jumping tournament.

Problems of Origin

One of the prime tasks in a study such as this was to establish an authentic origin to the sport in Canada. However, clues as to the first appearance of skis in Canada may well lie in the yet undiscovered remains of North American Indian and Eskimo cultures. In the Pre-Columbian period, these cultures likely made contact with the existing Norse cultures of Greenland and Iceland, if not through natural means, then certainly through contacts with elements of the Vinland settlements

confirmed by the recent archaeological discoveries in Newfoundland.¹ Skis, in this case, may have been introduced into North America as early as 1000 A.D.² The Indian, with his functional and dependable snowshoe, and the Viking, with his elegant ski, may have, at some time, crossed paths.³ It is possible that their mutually shared problems of winter transportation would have created, in both parties, a natural interest in questioning their respective methods of moving over snow.

If skis were used by the Vikings in North America, the culture of the coastal Indians would probably have been exposed to this mode of travel. That they were not readily adopted, may be due to the practicality of the highly developed Indian snowshoe, and their apparent lack of skill in the use of skis. The Vinland settlements did not last more than a few years, and the continual Indian-Norse hostility was such that it did not encourage the transmission of knowledge, skills or artifacts.

Ski Club Development

As has been stated, skiing in Western Canada, before 1930, lacked the support given to Eastern ski interests by the large numbers of recreational skiers. These individuals often

¹H. Ingstad, "Vinland Ruins Prove Vikings Found The New World," National Geographic, (November 1965), p. 715.

²A Brief Summary of American Ski History, Tenth Anniversary Program of the National Ski Hall of Fame and Ski Museum, United States Ski Educational Foundation Incorporated, Ishpeming, Michigan, 1962, p. 6.

³H. Ingstad, Personal Correspondence, July 27, 1967.

became involved with, and interested in, the executive and administrative tasks of running a ski club. Few sportsmen in the West were prepared to assume leadership roles, beyond that required for competitive events. In most parts of Canada, topography and climate were the limiting factors for skiing, with the exception being the West Coast area near Vancouver. Here, skiing enjoyed a late, but enthusiastic, introduction. Vancouver, as Montreal, was blessed with a natural ski area, easily accessible to the city, with a large population of potential ski enthusiasts.

Eastern Canadian ski interests lost little time in organizing clubs, social and sporting events, and in adopting formal procedures, rules and regulations. In the West, skiing activity was more or less informal and spontaneous, as most ski enthusiasts had neither the time nor the interest to become involved with formal club organization. In the West, the principal officers on the executive were also the club's athletes and, as was to be expected, they were more interested in competing than in holding meetings.

Isolation and Inter-Club Interaction

Around 1890, and during the first two decades after 1900, Eastern and Western skiing enjoyed a period of somewhat independent growth. Each developed in its own way and in many cases was quite unaware of the other. It was common for each ski area to sponsor and claim the National Championship of skiing.

Inter-club competitions in the West were subjected to more of a north-south orientation, and exchanges with the north-western States were quite commonplace. In the East, the Ottawa-Montreal-Toronto areas were fairly self supporting but, by 1920, an Ottawa-Montreal competitive axis had become well established through frequent competitive exchanges. Certainly Montreal, with Mount Royal and the nearby Laurentians became regarded as the undisputed centre of Eastern skiing.

Skiing in Canada, a Regional Pattern of Development

Characteristic of much of Canada during the late 1800 period and much of the early 1900 era was the extreme isolation of towns, especially in the western regions. This encouraged the development of numerous independent areas of intense ski interest. Travel was restricted to the major rail routes and to the roads and trails that joined nearby towns and villages. During the winter, many of these areas became even more isolated as snow often blocked the roads until late spring. Contacts between major centres of population were, in the pre-1920 period, extremely limited. Even in the more densely populated parts of Eastern Canada roads were not maintained for winter travel and, as a result, most people were forced to rely entirely upon the railways. When compared to the ski centres of Montreal and Ottawa, parts of the West, at this time, were thought of as a wild and untamed frontier. The characteristic informal and spontaneous quality of Western sports and social

pastimes was a distinct contrast to the more formal and socially conscious modes of expression in the East. These differences were apparent up to 1940, and even today traces of this sentiment can be seen at championships, conferences and annual Association meetings.

East-West Differences

Canadian skiing, in the years 1900 to 1940, encountered many problems in its transition from small interest groups to a sport supported by a National Ski Association. From rather humble beginnings, typified by activities such as occasional ski hikes and small ski jumps, the sport was to develop and expand into the many separate and distinct branches that we know today. Its present popular appeal exists among all age groups and all segments of society. In retrospect, many of the problems can be related to the type of society and social setting in which the sport was conceived. Most of the early skiing ventures enjoyed an isolated and independent development. Few, if any, outside influences of importance affected the existing local ski environment. When skiing and Canadian society reached the stage whereby inter-ski-club activity was desirable and possible, these sectional differences became readily apparent. The disputes, disagreements and controversies that characterized Eastern and Western skiing, up to 1935, serve only to dramatize the influence of these early formative years.

A Tribute to the Scandinavian Influence

From a study of selected areas and from others not included in the text of the thesis, it appears that it is the settlers of Scandinavian origin who have contributed greatly to the development of skiing in Canada. It is hoped that this reference may in some small way honour their numerous contributions. In almost every instance in Canada where skiing developed, it was due to the initial influence of a Scandinavian. They were considered the ski experts, and blessed with a knowledge of ski techniques, were called upon to help organize many of the first ski competitions, and to act as the first informal ski instructors in Canada.

The Scandinavians thus became associated, at some level, with almost every ski venture in Canada. Certainly the stimulus and leadership that led to the formation of most of the older ski clubs in this country came from the Scandinavian-Canadian ethnic community. Whenever competitive or organized skiing developed, they again became the technical authorities on ski technique, instruction or in the conduct of competitions. As competitors, teachers, officials and organizers, they introduced and spread skiing throughout North America. Their success extended a Nordic sporting dimension to the Canadian winter.

The C.A.S.A.

In both the East and the West, skiing became organized under the influence of the C.A.S.A. In the East, the association

seems to have had a more favourable affect, while in the West its early interests appeared more negative. However, its mere presence did serve to accentuate the problems which eventually helped to bring Western and Eastern ski interests together in 1935. Over the years, the C.A.S.A. has been charged with the responsibility of advancing and regulating the sport throughout Canada. In doing this, it has established and enforced regulations pertaining to such things as competitions and amateurism. They have trained and sent competitors to international events as well as promoting aspects of the competitive sport in Canada. Since its founding, in 1920, the C.A.S.A. has perhaps been the most significant single force in Canadian skiing.

H. P. Douglas

If the C.A.S.A. as an organization has been instrumental in shaping the course of events in skiing, then it is H. Percy Douglas who has been the individual force which has guided that Association through its struggling years from 1920 to 1930. Douglas had been active as a snow-shoer for several years, and when he arrived in Montreal in 1906 he was immediately attracted to skiing and soon became one of the leading ski pioneers of that city. By 1907 Douglas had become one of the more prominent members of the Montreal Club, and he helped to inaugurate publication of the first Annual of the Montreal Ski Club. This yearbook of skiing later became the official publication of the C.A.S.A. As editor of this yearly review of Canadian Skiing, Douglas was influential in providing researchers of today one of

the most accurate source-books related to skiing in Canada. He maintained his role as yearbook editor for the C.A.S.A. until 1940, when the Second Great War caused it to cease publication.

It was Douglas who actively promoted the idea of a National Ski Association, and who was responsible for calling the first meeting in 1920. He was honoured by being elected its first President, a post which he held for an unprecedented ten years. Since that first C.A.S.A. meeting, Douglas has been regarded as Canada's greatest ski organizer, writer and administrative authority.⁴ He submitted his resignation in 1930, after ten difficult, but unblemished years. Throughout this time, the groundwork had been laid for the dramatic and significant developments that were to take place in the thirties. They were years that saw the prestige of the association grow, in spite of differences of opinion and disputes that would have destroyed many lesser organizations. Throughout, the President had remained above the internal problems, and brought much credit to himself and to the office he held. His resignation was submitted in 1930, and the executive position of honorary president was created to ensure that the benefits of his experience would not be lost to the Association. It has been said that "Percy Douglas has been a part of every major ski development in Canada".⁵

⁴Canadian Amateur Ski Association, "Minutes of the Tenth Annual Meeting", Canadian Ski Annual, 1930-31, pp. 18-20.

⁵Statement by C. E. Mortureux, Minutes of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Amateur Ski Association, February 22, Ottawa, C.A.S.A. Records, p. 5, National Ski Museum.

C.A.S.A. Standing Committees

Several special committees were established by the C.A.S.A., which resulted in the formation of agencies related to ski instruction and ski safety. It is evident that much of the success enjoyed today by the Canadian Ski Instructors Alliance can be in part attributed to the work of the C.A.S.A. Ski School Committee in 1936 under the leadership of Dr. W. L. Ball. The Canadian Ski Patrol System gained much of its initial support from the work of the Laurentian Zone First Aid Committee, which first began operation in 1935. Junior and school boy skiing received guidance from committees within the C.A.S.A., and ski clubs were encouraged to sponsor special school-oriented competitions. It is perhaps only in inter-collegiate skiing that the C.A.S.A. has been excluded. Here, strong and independent leadership from McGill University in Canada, and Dartmouth College in the U.S.A., resulted in separate and distinct inter-collegiate ski organizations being formed.

Competitive Skiing

The growth of competitive skiing and the changes in events are reflected in a review of selected championships. The contributions of the athletes and officials are perhaps best recorded in the official record books of Canadian skiing. It was not until 1937 that a National Ski Championship had been held, which was representative of both East and West, including

men's and women's events in which alpine, nordic and the combined events were contested. Canada's interest in international skiing was stimulated by the success of the Winter Olympic Games. However, the results were not encouraging, as the Canadians suffered from perennial problems related to the lack of proper equipment, adequate training, and a knowledge of current ski techniques. However, by the 1936 Olympic Games there appeared to be signs of improvement. Canada was for the first time represented in Europe by a ladies' and a men's ski team, both of which enjoyed somewhat encouraging results.

Alpine Skiing

It was during the 1920 decade that indications of a new trend in skiing first became apparent in Canada. In 1928 slalom became recognized by the International Ski Federation as an official ski event. The bulk of the European ski population had already become attracted to hill skiing, and this trend soon spread to North America. That same year the first official slalom race in Canada was run on the Big Hill, at Shawbridge, and the future of this discipline was assured in Canada.

Significant Events to 1940

Following 1930 certain events seem to have become highlights in the evolution of Canadian alpine skiing. Firstly, the arrival of the Oxford-Cambridge University Ski Team from Great Britain in 1931, and their subsequent competitions with McGill, brought European equipment and racing techniques to Canada.

This event was followed closely by the Olympic Games in 1932. A return engagement in 1932 with the British Universities in Europe resulted in an improved showing by the Canadians. That same year the first of the Kandahar races was held on Mont Tremblant. The Penguin Ski Club was also formed, and its membership rules excluded men from joining, as it was exclusively a women's athletic club. In 1936 a Swiss University Ski Team visited North America, and the Winter Olympic Games were held in Germany. It was the visit of the German University skiers, in 1938, which was to be the last Pan-Atlantic exchange between Europe and Canada until after 1945. The German team made several competitive appearances, competing against the top skiers in Canadian clubs from coast to coast.

The Ski Tow Changes a Sport

Interest in hill skiing was greatly enhanced by the unspectacular appearance in 1929 of a ski tow operated by Alex Foster at Shawbridge, Quebec. This device, the first of its kind in North America, would help to revolutionize the skiing activity of the future. Ski hills and related facilities were soon improved, trails were cleared and ski runs extended. Thus, the availability of well-groomed ski hills made the emerging sport more attractive to the novice, since many of the natural hazards had been removed. Though pioneering groups in most clubs continued to extol the virtues of natural trails, the overwhelming voice of the new ski converts advocated a preference for the ski tow and groomed hills.

Leisure Habits Change

During the latter part of the 1930 decade, the influence of a five-day work week began to affect the leisure habits of Canadians. With a two-day weekend, the time available for winter recreational and sporting activities was greatly extended. Longer and more extensive ski ventures were possible, and the trend was to travel away from the city to a specialized area devoted to skiing.⁶

Transportation and Facilities

Improved means of transportation and better public services near ski areas also encouraged participation on weekends. Many areas, which were now considered ski resorts in the past, had been more or less isolated to outsiders. These resort areas were, at this time, usually wholly dependent upon the railways for winter transportation. In order to encourage the growing interest in skiing, the major railways began to offer special rates on weekend ski-trains from Toronto to Collingwood, Montreal to the Laurentians, Winnipeg to La Riviere, Edmonton to Jasper, and Calgary to Banff. Thus improvements in transportation, plus the growth of the sport, encouraged regional, provincial and national events. New, virgin ski country further from the large centres of population soon became attractive to skiers and they developed rapidly. Consequently, the developments in rail transportation have been important and

⁶"The Ottawa Ski Club Reports", Canadian Ski Annual, 1938, p. 31.

their development has somewhat paralleled the growth of Canadian Skiing.

The world political situation, by 1940, had deteriorated, creating conditions which all but ended Canadian sports competition. However, the groundwork had been established, and the organization basis developed to such an extent that organized skiing was prepared to confront the social conditions prevalent during the late 1940 period. This period ended what could be considered the developmental era of Canadian skiing and, in 1945, what has become referred to as "the post-war ski boom" was about to begin.⁷

Along with the return of ski interest, the alpine disciplines of slalom and downhill emerged as the more popular ski forms, and they soon replaced ski jumping and cross country as the more popular competitive events. By the 1960 decade, they, and their recreational counterpart, hill skiing, had completely superceded the others in popularity and have become a dominant force in Canada's sporting culture. Speaking of this evaluation in 1961, Rae Grinnell, then President of the C.A.S.A. said, "Skiing in Canada has indeed come of age...and credit is due to the individual members and their ski clubs."⁸

⁷J. A. Knight, "Ski Boom", The Star Weekly Magazine, January 15, 1966, pp. 19-22.

⁸Rae Grinnell, "Message from the President," (Canadian Amateur Ski Association Section), Canadian Ski Annual, Vol. XLVI: 11 November 1961, p. 45.

The Future

Scholars are just beginning to uncover the vast subject area in physical education, sport and recreation, which up until recently has not been part of our known cultural heritage. Research in skiing should perhaps be directed towards the more detailed collection of facts relating to area and local ski history. That is, to establish a more complete historical account of skiing in all of the geographic areas of Canada. The writer is aware of the limitations that were imposed upon this study and future research might extend our existing knowledge of skiing in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and the Maritimes.

Extensive work is required in the area of solving some of the theoretical and practical problems related to the origin of skiing in North America. Archaeological evidence tends to support a Norse cultural entry into this continent,⁹ and if so, it seems feasible to consider that skis would have been used on this continent at that time.

Studies that focus upon one aspect of skiing would also be important, as they would identify changes, trends and those major influences that have affected the sport. Possible areas might include the study of technique, instruction, equipment,

⁹Gwyn Jones, "The First Europeans in America", The Beaver Magazine, Winter, 1964, p. 5; T. J. Oleson, "The Norsemen in America", Canadian Historical Association Booklet No. 14, Ottawa, Canada, 1963; T. J. Oleson, "The Vikings in America", Canadian Historical Review, XXXVI, 1955, p. 3; "Skiing", Encyclopedia Americana, (Canadian Edition), 1963, p. 70.

clothing and facilities. Major competitive problems, such as those related to amateurism, have not been treated in any detail by this study. Also, the influence of what has become a powerful force in modern skiing, that of the ski industry itself, might be considered. The history of ski mountaineering, military skiing and skiing in the school system have been dealt with only superficially, and are offered as suggested areas for future study.

The influential leadership of certain individuals, and the contributions made by ski organizations to Canadian skiing appear through the study to have been significant. Research projects might be designed to provide biographical information on many of the early sporting leaders in this country. Biographical information on many, if it exists, is limited to brief newspaper accounts, and personal sketches in precis form. There can be no doubt that their contributions have been great, while our appreciation and interest has been somewhat less. In skiing alone, we know all too little about the contributions and exploits of men such as Birch, Jeldness, Moren, Engen, Nelson, Verne, Lockeberg, Tolleffsen, Drummond, Provencher, Mortureux and Douglas. They are but a few who have helped to shape the course of one sport in our culture.

The popularity of skiing, with its many inherent qualities, was fast approaching "the explosive stage"¹⁰ in 1940,

¹⁰L. O'Connor, Canadian Ski Technique (McLelland and Stewart Ltd.,; Toronto 1968), p. 7.

when the Second Great War interrupted and suspended organized ski activity. According to O'Connor,¹¹ this trend was brought about primarily by a greater amount of leisure time and by an increase in spending of Canada's recreation dollars. For skiing, this trend has continued at an even greater pace ever since 1945, and indications have suggested that it will continue in the future.¹² Canadian skiing has, in the process, become a markedly social as well as a physical sport. It has, since 1900, succeeded in capturing the imagination of the public in all segments of Canadian society. This fact is best exemplified by referring to the official membership list of a single Canadian club, the largest in the world, which approached twelve thousand in 1969,¹³ and to competitive events which have exhibited similar expansion tendencies.¹⁴

In conclusion, the role of skiing in Canada as a recreational pastime and a competitive sport has been significant. It is perhaps easier to comprehend certain aspects of sport in this country today by reference to this and similar historical or developmental studies. It is hoped that the writer has, to some extent, succeeded in recording the contri-

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Leisure in Canada, The Proceedings of the Montmorency Conference on Leisure, Montmorency, Quebec, September 2-6, 1969, Fitness and Amateur Sport Directorate, Ottawa, pp. 19-35.

¹³Glenn Ross, "President's Report", Ottawa Ski Club Bulletin, Ottawa, 1969, p. 7.

¹⁴Ibid.

butions of individuals, the accounts of the significant events, and the evolution of some of the important trends, all of which are important to skiing. If, in some small way, this has contributed to a deeper appreciation of the past, respect for the present, and confidence in the future, then this study has been justified.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER WRITTEN BY OLAUS JELDNESS, JULY 3, 1932

Excerpts from a letter written by Olaus Jeldness, dated July 3, 1932, to Mr. A. G. Cameron of Trail, B.C., regarding the inception of the Rossland Winter Carnival.

The first carnival was held in 1898, when an association was formed and trophies donated to be presented to winners of the different sports. Among the leading members of that association were the Hon. C. H. Mackintosh, A. B. McKenzie, J. S. C. Fraser and others.

The ski jumping trophy was donated by the War Eagle Consolidated Mining and Development Co., and the ski running trophy was presented by the Hon. C. H. Mackintosh, both emblematic of the championship of Canada.

The donators left it to the association to frame the inscriptions and it developed during the discussion that the ski sport championship had not been established in Canada and therefore it originated in Rossland in 1898.

I happened to win both trophies, three times in succession, viz-1898, 1899 and 1900, and thus became the first ski champion of Canada. The trophies became my property as stipulated by the association.

Shortly thereafter I presented to the Carnival Association a cup, also emblematic of the ski jumping championship of Canada. This was won by Torgal Noren three times, and although

not in succession, he was allowed to become its owner. A dispute arose as to whether or not the winner, in order to be entitled to it absolutely, should win it three times in succession, and as I was the donor, the question was left to me to decide. Indeciding in favor of the winner, I offered to give another trophy in its place, which I did subsequently.

In 1907 the Rossland Carnival Association was incorporated. Among the first trustees were J. S. Fraser, L. A. Campbell, A. B. Mackenzie and Thomas S. Gilmour. To this association I presented this second trophy and the trustees passed a resolution to the effect that the winner could never become its absolute owner, but would have his name engraved on it and have possession for one year. It was always supported by a gold medal and the latter became the property of the winner.

Now, it may be of interest here to clear up authorship of the inscription on the trophy, which has been in dispute. As I was, in those days, operating in Nevada, Mr. Fraser corresponded with me regarding this matter and sent, for my approval, an outline of a suggested inscription by W. J. Nelson. I used two lines, by changing the wording somewhat and adding two of my own and the verse became as it now reads, viz:

"Play not for gain, but sport,
Leap not for gold, but glee;
Oh youth! Play well thy part
Whate'er Life's game may be."

It is, I hope, with pardonable pride, that I recall hearing Sir Charles Tupper recite those lines before an audience

of several hundred people and predicting that those sentiments will be engraved on championship trophies of Canada for generations yet to come.

APPENDIX B

MINUTES OF THE FIRST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE C.A.S.A.

Minutes of the first Annual Meeting of the Canadian Amateur Ski Association, held on Saturday, February 19th, 1921, at 10:30 a.m. in Room 1100, Windsor Hotel, Montreal, in conjunction with the Annual Tournament of the Association.

Present: The following properly qualified Directors, H. P. Douglas, C. Tollefsen, C. E. Mortureux, W. F. C. Devlin, F. W. Russell.

H. P. Douglas, President, took the chair.

F. W. Russell, in the unavoidable absence of G. A. Wendt, Secretary-Treasurer, who was engaged on duties connected with the Tournament, acted as Secretary.

The notice calling the meeting was read and approved.

The President read the Letters of Incorporation of the Association which were approved.

The proposed By-Laws were carefully read, discussed and approved, as written with the following changes:

Section 4. A notice of seven (7) days shall be given.

Section 7. Special meetings of the Association may be called by the President or in his absence by the Vice-President, upon the written request of an affiliated club, containing full explanation of the reason, and if in their opinion such meeting is necessary.

Section 23. - (a). The Secretary-Treasurer shall be appointed by the Directors at the annual meeting. He shall be a member or an appointee of the Club holding the Tournament that year.

Section 27. The executive committee shall be composed of three (3) members of the board of directors.

Section 31. The annual fees per Club shall be fifteen dollars (\$15.00), payable not later than two (2) weeks prior to the Annual Meeting. The club holding the Annual Tournament shall pay to the Association for the privilege, ten per cent (10%) of its gross receipts, guaranteeing fifty dollars (\$50.00), which must be paid over to the Association within two weeks after the date upon which the Annual Tournament has been held.

After considerable discussion the following rules and regulations were decided upon and approved by the Directors, the same to form part of the By-laws of the Association:

Amateur Qualifications: An amateur skier shall not;

- receive payment as a ski instructor,
- take part or assist directly or indirectly in tournaments, competitions or exhibitions for money or profit,
- compete with or against professionals, or assist in any way in competitions or exhibitions where professionals are entered, or assisting, an amateur may receive hotel and travelling expenses when taking part in out-of-town events, or when promoting the interests of good skiing, but only when sanctioned by the Executive of the Club.

His compensation, however, must not exceed actual necessary expenses for travelling and hotel for this particular trip. Payments shall always be made to and through the club of which he is a member in good standing.

Any skier breaking the rules above, shall be immediately reported by his club to the Secretary of the C.A.S.A. together with a full report of the circumstances. The Directors of the C.A.S.A. will, if after full consideration he is found guilty, declare him a professional. The decision of the C.A.S.A. shall be final.

When a skier is declared a Professional, the Secretary of the C.A.S.A., will immediately advise all clubs to this effect, and his membership in his club will be at once cancelled. The Secretary of the C.A.S.A. shall also advise all clubs immediately a club's amateur standing is in question.

A skier who has been declared a Professional cannot be reinstated an amateur before two years have elapsed from the last time he was declared a Professional. He, skier, can regain his amateur standing more than once.

2. Disqualification: The Directors of the C.A.S.A. have the power to disqualify from all Association events, for such periods as they deem advisable, any skier who, in their opinion, merits such punishment. All affiliated clubs shall report immediately with full particulars to the Secretary of the Association any, and all, cases which, in their opinion, deserve discipline, and the Secretary of the Association shall report immediately their decision to all affiliated clubs.

3. Classification of Competitors: (a) novice; (b) intermediate; (c) senior.

A Novice is an amateur who has never won a first prize in a novice or a prize in a higher competition.

An Intermediate is an amateur who has never won a first prize in an intermediate or a prize in a higher competition.

Senior: Any amateur may compete in this class, provided that in the opinion of the Officials, he is properly qualified.

The above classifications apply to both jumping and cross country events, but classification in one has no bearing on the other.

A skier can compete for only one club during a season, except by a bonafide change of residence and a transfer from one club to another, such transfer to be given in writing to the Secretary of the Association and signed by the President of each club and the Principal.

4. Dominion Tournaments: A Dominion Amateur Championship Tournament shall be held each year at a place selected by the Directors at their annual meeting.

The Club or Clubs in the place chosen by the Directors shall make all necessary arrangements and provisions for conducting such tournaments in accordance with the regulations now and hereafter adopted by the Association.

Dominion Tournaments shall be open only to Canadian Amateur skiers, who are members in good standing of clubs affiliated with the C.A.S.A., but members of ski clubs outside the Dominion of Canada may, with the approval of the Directors of the C.A.S.A., compete in Dominion Tournaments. All competitors shall pay to the Association an entry fee of \$1.00 for each event and this entry fee must be sent with the competitor's entry.

Elimination Competitions. Each club sending contestants to a Dominion Tournament must hold a local elimination competition and enter only competitors who are qualified to compete in a tournament of this importance.

In jumping, seventy feet standing should be an average qualification.

Officials acting at Dominion or Local Tournaments shall satisfy themselves as to the amateur standing of competitors and that they are entered in their proper classes.

Competent judges and officials for the Dominion Championship Tournament shall be appointed by the Directors of the Association.

5. Contests at Dominion Tournaments. At each Dominion Tournament there shall be provided a jumping contest, a cross country contest, and such other events as may be decided upon.

Each contest shall be judged separately, according to the rules governing ski contests set forth in these by-laws.

6. Association Prizes at Dominion Tournament. The Association shall, each year, provide for both the jumping and cross country competition a gold, a silver and a bronze medal.

The contestants obtaining the best four in each event shall be awarded the gold medal of the Association for that year. This will be emblematical of the Amateur Championship of Canada. The second best will be awarded the silver medal and the third, the bronze medal. These medals shall be uniform in size and design, from year to year, and shall be altered only by consent of the Directors.

7. Division of Proceeds of Dominion Tournament. The Club in the place chosen by the Directors for the Dominion Tournament shall bear and pay all expenses in connection therewith.

8. Local Tournaments. A club desiring to hold a tournament other than a Dominion Tournament, shall make application for assignment of date to the Secretary, stating in the application the date preferred. If no other club within fifty miles has been granted the same date, the Secretary shall grant such date and forthwith notify all other clubs.

He club shall be allowed to postpone a Tournament to such a day as would conflict with a tournament already dated by an affiliated club.

He affiliated club shall be allowed to hold any tournaments on the two days during which the Dominion Tournament is being held.

9. Jumping Competition: Judging and Rules for Scoring Points. Every competitor is allowed three jumps, each one to be judged.

All competitors in the same class start from the same place. In scoring points, due regard is given to what the competitor accomplishes from the start to the finish of the run. Every consideration shall be given to: -

a confident and correct use of skis,
the control of the skis,
the length of the jump.

SCORING

For standing jump, one point per feet of distance jumped is given. For style, (ski and body control), points are given from 1 - 20.

Style for standing jump8 - 20 points
Style for falling jump1 - 12 points
(Touch one or both hands constitutes a fall).
The jump must be exceptionally good to score over
14 points.

Special prizes in jumping may, at the discretion of the judges, be awarded as follows: -

To the one showing the best style.
To the one making the longest standing
jump, this jump to be one of the three
as above.

10. Cross country Races.

A. A starter, two timekeepers, a chief of course and other assistants as may be necessary shall be appointed.

B. The distance of the race shall not be less than ten miles measured as accurately as possible, which shall be over rolling country to give a fair test of all-round skiing.

C. The course for the Dominion Championship cross country race shall be especially laid out for this event. He competitor shall go over any part of the course, before the race, under penalty of disqualification.

D. The course of the race shall be marked out as plainly as possible.

E. Contestants shall each be numbered and run consecutively; their numbers and corresponding places in the race shall be allotted by drawing.

F. The contestants shall start at regular intervals of one minute each. The time at start and finish shall be taken with a stop watch by two regularly appointed timers. The elapsed times shall decide the winners of the race.

G. A contestant on call of "track" shall immediately give the overtaking skier one-half of his track and shall allow him to pass without any interference.

H. All claims must be immediately lodged with the officials conducting the race.

The Directors awarded the next Dominion Tournament for 1922 to the Ottawa Ski Club, - the date to be decided later.

The following Officers and Directors were elected for the year: -

President:	H. P. Douglas
Vice-President:	J. A. D. Holbreck
Secretary-Treasurer:	George A. Wendt
Directors:	H. P. Douglas
	C. Tollefsen, M.S.C.
	C. E. Mortureux
	J. A. D. Holbrook, O.S.C.
	W. F. C. Devlin
	John Graham, C.S.C.
	F. W. Russell
	A. Bissett, Q.S.C.

There being no further business, the meeting then adjourned at 1:00 p. m.

Signed,

H. P. Douglas,

President.

APPENDIX C

SKI CHAMPIONS OF THE CANADIAN AMATEUR SKI ASSOCIATION

CANADIAN CHAMPIONS, MEN

1921 - 1939

Montreal, February 19-20, 1921

Ski Jumping - E. O. Sunberg, Temiskaming Ski Club
 Cross Country - Frank MacKinnon, Montreal Ski Club

Ottawa, February 26-27, 1922

Ski Jumping - R. Omtveldt, Norge Ski Club, Chicago
 Cross Country - R. Monsen, Norsemen Ski Club, New York

Montreal, February 24-25, 1923

Ski Jumping - R. Monsen, Montreal Ski Club
 Cross Country - R. Monsen, Montreal Ski Club

Ottawa, February 23-24, 1924

Ski Jumping - N. Berger, Montreal Ski Club
 Cross Country - E. Condon, Ottawa Ski Club

Montreal, February 21-22, 1925

Ski Jumping - N. Berger, Montreal Ski Club
 Cross Country - J. Johansen, Nansen Ski Club

Ottawa, February 28-29, 1926

Ski Jumping - N. Berger, Montreal Ski Club
 Cross Country - J. Satre, New York Ski Club

Montreal, February 26-27, 1927

Ski Jumping - L. Lehan, Montreal Ski Club
 Cross Country - R. Reid, Nansen Ski Club
 Combined - C. N. Proctor, Dartmouth Ski Club

Ottawa, February 25-26, 1928

Ski Jumping - R. Sivertsen, Montreal Ski Club
 Cross Country - B. Grayson-Bell, Ottawa Ski Club
 Combined - George Sumner, Montreal Ski Club

Montreal, February 23-24, 1929

Ski Jumping - G. Dupuis, Cliffside Ski Club
 Cross Country - H. Paumgarten, Austria
 Combined - J. Nordmoe, Camrose Ski Club
 Slalom - H. Paumgarten, Austria

Ottawa, February 22-23, 1930

Ski Jumping - R. Sivertsen, Montreal Ski Club
 Cross Country - E. Penttila, Montreal Ski Club
 Combined - J. Nordmoe, Camrose Ski Club

Revelstoke, February 3-4, 1931

Ski Jumping - J. Nordmoe, Camrose Ski Club
 Cross Country - H. Smejda, Vancouver Ski Club
 Combined - H. Smejda, Vancouver Ski Club

Montreal, February 20-21, 1932

Ski Jumping - A. Finsberg, Viking Outing Club, Montreal
 Cross Country - E. Penttila, Montreal Ski Club
 Combined - K. Engstad, Burns Lake Ski Club, B.C.
 Slalom - F. Campbell, McGill University

Ottawa, February 25-26, 1933

Ski Jumping - C. Lund, St. Paul
 Cross Country - E. Penttila, Montreal Ski Club
 Combined - K. Baadsvik, Viking Outing Club, Montreal
 Slalom - J. Blair, Red Birds Ski Club

Three Rivers, February 24-25, 1934

Ski Jumping - Percy Bott, Montreal Ski Club
 Cross Country - Halvor Heggveit, Ottawa Ski Club
 Combined - K. Baadsvik, Viking Outing Club, Montreal

Montreal, February 23-24, 1935

Ski Jumping - Gunnar Omen, Norge Ski Club, Chicago
 Cross Country - J. Taylor, Ottawa Ski Club
 Combined - W. Clark, St. Patrick's College, Ottawa

Toronto, February 22-23, 1936

Ski Jumping - Percy Bott, Ski Club of Montreal
 Cross Country - A. Black, Sudbury
 Combined - F. J. Hannah, McGill Ski Club
 Slalom - D. Mann, Toronto Ski Club

Banff, Alberta, March 5-6-7-8, 1937

Ski Jumping - A. Engen, Salt Lake City
 Cross Country - Howard Chivers, Dartmouth
 Combined - S. Kolterud, Norway
 Slalom - P. Francioli, Switzerland
 Downhill - P. Francioli, Switzerland

Ottawa, February 26-27, 1938

Ski Jumping - J. Riddell, Ski Club of Montreal
 Cross Country - B. Heggveit, Ottawa
 Combined - R. Johannsen, McGill
 Slalom - Karl Ringer, Germany
 Downhill - R. Johannsen, McGill

Fort William, February 24-25-26, 1939

Ski Jumping - Open	- Reidar Andersen, Norway
Ski Jumping - Closed	- Olle Bakkelund, Temiskaming, Ontario
Cross Country	- Gault Gillespie, St. Margarets
Downhill - Open	- Reidar Andersen, Norway
Slalom	- L. Georgas, Owen Sound
Downhill - Closed	- Punch Bott, Montreal
Combined - Closed	- Ted Paris, Banff, Alberta

Banff, 1940

Ski Jumping	- H. Gunnarsen, Revelstoke Ski Club
Cross Country	- Gault Gillespie, Ste. Agathe Ski Club
Slalom	- A. Cotes, Tyee Ski Club
Combined	- A. Cotes, Tyee Ski Club
Combined	- O. Johansen, Copper Mountain
Downhill	- Ted Paris, Ski Runners of the Canadian Rockies

CANADIAN CHAMPIONS, WOMEN

DOWNHILL AND SLALOM COMBINED

HOLT-WILSON TROPHY

1935 - 1939

Mont Tremblant, March 10, 1935

Madeleine McNichols, Penguin Ski Club

Vancouver, April 10, 1936

Peggy Harlin, Vancouver Ski Club

St. Margaret's, February 28, 1937

Peggy Johannsen, Penguin Ski Club

Banff, March 5, 1938

Gertrude Wepsala, Tyee Ski Club, Vancouver, B.C.

Seignory Club, February 18-19, 1939

Gertrude Wepsala, Tyee Ski Club, Vancouver, B.C.

Banff, 1940

Dorothy Michaels, Laurentian Cross Country Ski Club

Helge Ingstad.

APPENDIX D

Vettakollen.

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Oslo

July 27. 1967

Mr. Rolf T. Lund..
School of Phys.Ed.
Queen's University
Kingston- Ontario

Dear Mr. Lund.

Thank you for your letter of July 21. I do not know about any Eskimo or Indian - tribe having used skis or something that might remind about skis. If I were you, I would however get hold of a book dealing with the implements of all the native tribes in North America. Even if you might not find skis there, ~~you~~ it is a possibility that you might find something related. It is worth while trying even if I believe that you only will find snowshoes.

With regard to the old Norse settlement in Greenland, no fragments of skis has been found. This negative archeological result is not definitive as several hundred farms have not been excavated. I believe it very likely that the Norse people in Greenland used skis. They continued the old Norse culture from Norway where skis have been used some thousand years. The nature of western Greenland has much in common with the nature of Norway. Skis would have been very useful, and I would consider it surprisingly if the practical Norsemen did not also make use of skis in Greenland.

We don't know anything about skis having been used by Norsemen in "Vinland". Skis would have been very useful during wintering in Newfoundland. If they used skis in Greenland, which is likely, why should they not also use skis in the New countries?

With regard to Iceland I do not remember if skis have been used there in old time. You will here have to check with the Icelandic sagas or you may write to the National Museum of Reykjavik.

If you are going to write about skis I believe it might be of interest to give something of the background showing that skis have been used in Scandinavia at least 4000 - 5000 years ago and in the same area slowly developed into the modern form. I recommend that you contact our greatest expert in this matter, lektor ~~Jakob Våge~~ Jakob Våge, Sørkedalsveien 241, Røa, pr Oslo. He has also written an excellent book about the subject.

APPENDIX E

ILLUSTRATIONS AND THEIR SOURCES

FIGURE	SOURCE
1.	Archives of the Canadian Rockies, Banff.
2.	<u>Canadian Illustrated News</u> , 1879.
3.	Mrs. Agnes Hersloff, Spokane.
4.	Archives of the Canadian Rockies, Banff.
5.	Provincial Archives, Victoria.
6.	<u>Ibid.</u>
7.	Cyril Paris, Banff.
8.	Author's file.
9.	Provincial Archives, Victoria.
10.	Mr. Rolf T. Lund, (Senior), Camrose.
11.	Provincial Archives, Victoria.
12.	Author's file.
13.	Spaldings Sports, Almanac, 1927, p. 116.
14.	Author's file.
15.	Canadian Sport Monthly, January, 1964, p. 11.
16.	<u>Canadian Ski Yearbook</u> , 1935, p. 65.
17.	Provincial Archives, Victoria.
18.	<u>Ibid.</u>
19.	Archives of the Canadian Rockies, Banff.
20.	<u>Ibid.</u>
21.	Rolf T. Lund, (Senior), Camrose.
22.	John Haugen, Edmonton.
23.	Rolf T. Lund, (Senior), Camrose.
24.	Author's file.

APPENDIX F
ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1



A SNOWSHOE TRIP TO QUEBEC

Mr. A. Birch, a Norwegian gentleman, Montreal, has a pair of patent Norwegian snowshoes upon which he has taken a trip to Quebec, starting on Friday last. The snowshoes are composed entirely of wood, are about nine feet long, six inches broad, and have foot board and toe-strap. He walks with the aid of a pole, and crosses ice not strong enough to bear a good sized dog, so buoyant are the shoes in their action.

Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 7



Figure 6



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 15



Figure 14



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23

MAJOR SKI AREAS IN CANADA IN 1940



Fig. 24

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